HOURS WITH THE BIBLE;

OR,

THE SCRIPTURES IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN KNOWLEDGE,

BY

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AND LARGELY REWRITTEN.

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FROM REHOBOAM TO HEZEKIAH,
WITH THE CONTEMPORARY PROPHETS.

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purple, and of having grown up amidst the despotic and unpopular influences of a splendid and selfish court. If, moreover, he boasted Solomon for a father, his mother was a daughter of Hanun, king of Ammon, and, as such, an idolatress.[1] With a touch here and there of his father's shrewdness, he had inherited little of his other endowments, as often happens with the sons of great men. Short-sighted and haughty, as a rule, he was also deficient in the self-reliance so essential to an absolute king, and shewed neither warlike capacity nor spirit. In the circumstances amidst which his reign began, he was quite unfit to pilot the State through the dangers that threatened it. Incapable of realizing that any existed, he drove it on the rocks and wrecked it for ever.

David had received the homage of all the tribes while yet at Hebron, before the taking of Jerusalem, and Solomon had, in the same way, been publicly accepted as king before his father's death, on occasion of his enthronement in presence of the representatives of the nation.[2] More than a year,[3] however, seems to have elapsed after Rehoboam's accession before he took any steps in this direction, and it may be that even then, action was initiated by the tribes rather than by him. He seems, indeed, to have assumed that the throne was his right by succession, apart from any popular ratification of his claims, and to have acted with the same high-handed Orientalism as his father; as if the people were made to obey, and he born to rule them as he chose.

National assemblies had in earlier times been held on all great public occasions, but latterly they had been confined

[1] 2 Sam. x. 1, compared with Septuagint, 1 Kings xii. 24.
[2] 1 Chron. xxviii. 1. 1 Kings i. 40, 45, 46.
[3] 1 Kings xii. 26. Septuagint, Vat.

to the accession of a king. Such a parliament of the ten northern tribes was now convened, presumably by the elders —that is, the sheiks—of each; not, however, at Jerusalem, as might have been expected, but in their own territory, at Shechem, which, having been long the centre of Israelitish life in Palestine under Abraham and Jacob, retained for ages traces of its ancient dignity, as Rheims, the old capital of France, continued to be the scene of coronations long after Paris had taken its place as the national capital.

Rehoboam must come to them, not they to him. This itself was ominous, but he lived as yet in a fool's paradise, blind and deaf to what would have arrested the deepest attention of a sensible ruler. Meanwhile there was no overt hint of disloyal intentions; they desired only some reforms which, as free men, they had a right to claim. Yet they based their demand for these on a ground unpalatable in the extreme to a king. Their obedience to him, they said, in effect, was conditional; it was free to them to serve him or not, as they chose; if he confirmed their old constitutional liberties, they would accept him; if not, they would withdraw from allegiance. He had fancied the spirit of the people so tamed and broken, that such language and bearing, where he had looked for trembling servility, only infuriated him and roused his arbitrary self-will. "Thy father," said the sheiks—that is, elders—through whom they addressed him, "oppressed us with his exactions and with the huge cost of his royal establishments;" or, as the Greek Bible puts it, "made the meats of his table grievous to us.[1] Lighten this hard treatment and these heavy imposts, and we will serve thee." They had, indeed, special ground for

[1] The Hebrew word rendered "grievous service," used here, is translated elsewhere "bondage," "servitude," "servile work." Exod. vi. 6. Num. xxviii. 18. Neh. v. 18. Isa. xiv. 3. 2 Chron. x. 4, etc.

discontent, for they had no share in the glory of Jerusalem, or benefit from the vast expenditure on the court or the temple, though they toiled and paid for both. Judah, moreover, which had all the advantage of being the seat of royal and ecclesiastical grandeur, was a small and hitherto isolated and unimportant tribe, while the life of the nation beat strongly in the ten northern clans, for there was no foreign element among them, like that which had led to the introduction of idolatry by Solomon ; and the foreign fashions of such a mixed population, eager to imitate the luxury and caprices of the neighbouring races, were unknown, as yet, among the green hills and valleys of Central or Upper Palestine.[1]

Not unnaturally, three days' delay were demanded by Rehoboam before he gave his answer. However willing to make a just concession, his dignity required him to do it as became a king. Had he been equal to the occasion, the future of Israel might have been different. But a revolution was inevitable. "The king hearkened not unto the people ; for the cause was from the LORD."[2] Instinctively turning to the venerable men who had stood before his father, men thoughtful and experienced, they gave him advice which, had it been taken, might have averted the catastrophe. Gentle words, they said, and timely concessions, would bind the tribes to him for ever. But it is hard for a despot to humble himself. Was there no way of meeting the difficulty more flattering to his pride ? A younger generation of courtiers had grown up around him ; he would ask them. In their light insolence, however, they had no idea but coercion. Who were they who dared oppose the will of a king ? Rehoboam should treat them as slaves, and tell them that,

[1] Stade, 344. [2] 1 Kings xii. 15.

instead of lessening their burdens, he would increase them. His little finger should be thicker than his father's loins; instead of using common whips on them, like Solomon's taskmasters, he should see that they were driven to their work with knotted scourges![1]

It was enough! There was a leader among the tribes who knew how to profit by the emergency. Jeroboam had returned from Egypt to Palestine, on hearing of the death of Solomon, and was present at Shechem, as the chief spokesman for the assembly. The year since the great king's death had no doubt been diligently used by him in secret preparation for the crisis that had now arrived. The word of Ahijah the prophet, assuring him of the throne of the Ten Tribes, had not been forgotten, nor had any step been neglected to secure its fulfilment. The third day brought the haughty and insolent answer he had no doubt expected. Forthwith the matter was decided. The terrible cry was instantly heard which, in David's time, under Sheba,[2] had already well-nigh anticipated the secession now to be carried out.

> "What portion have we in David?
> What inheritance in Jesse's son?
> To your tents, O Israel![3]
> Now take care of your own house, O David!"

The work of two generations was undone in a moment! Loyal to David himself, the tribes at large had been alienated by the gross tyranny and selfish extravagance of Solo-

[1] 1 Kings xii. 11. Scorpions. The Romans called a whip tipped with sharp points of metal, a scorpion. [2] 2 Sam. xx. 2.

[3] This reference to tents ages after the nation had abandoned nomadic life, points, it may be, to the continuance among them, to a large extent, of the custom of living in tents in the hot summer, as is still largely done even by townspeople in Palestine. The tradition of their early tent life in the wilderness would be thus kept up. See *Land and Book*, p. 296.

mon's reign; the immunities granted to Judah had rekindled old jealousies, and a fierce passion for liberty had been roused, before which resistance was vain. The division of the nation into clans or tribes had, moreover, the same tendency among the Hebrews as it has always had elsewhere, to create and perpetuate sectional interests before which those of the nation as a whole, were rarely and only for a passing moment acknowledged, as we see in the feuds and incompatible claims to precedence among the Arab tribes in the story of Mahomet's life, or in the perennial rivalries and petty wars common among the Highland clans of Scotland till after Culloden, or in the chaotic riot and intertribal feuds till comparatively recent times among the septs and factions of Ireland.

Rehoboam, appalled, hardly knew what to do. Trying concession when too late, he sent the aged Adoram or Adoniram[1] to them to propose reforms. But he could not have chosen a worse representative than one who had been chief taskmaster in the odious past. A shower of stones greeted his appearance, and in a few moments he lay dying. His fate was a protest that they had struck for freedom, and that their slavery was ended. Terrified for his own life, the king hastily mounted his chariot and fled to Jerusalem, never to see Shechem again. The assembled tribes forthwith elected Jeroboam as king.

For the moment it must have seemed as if the House of David had lost everything. The sceptre left it was that only of a single tribe, with insignificant dependencies. From almost within sight of Jerusalem on the north, to the valley of the Orontes; from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, all else had passed into the hands of one whom

[1] 1 Kings iv. 6.

Solomon had first raised from obscurity. Judah, Rehoboam's own tribe, on its barren hills, alone remained faithful to him. The boundaries of the tribes generally had, in the course of ages, become more or less changed. Jerusalem stood on the territory of Benjamin, and its population belonged in great measure to that tribe.[1] The southern part of it, therefore, adhered to Judah, as far as Mizpeh and Geba;[2] but the northern half, including the ancient and revered sanctuaries of Bethel, Ramah, Gilgal, and Jericho, remained, as heretofore, connected with the fortunes of Ephraim.[3] Judah had already absorbed some part of Dan, for the villages of Zorah and Ajalon were reckoned hers,[4] and thus a fragment of the territory of that tribe, also, remained under Rehoboam. But the town of Dan in the far north was the capital of the tribe, and most of the clan would doubtless follow it in its adhesion to the northern confederacy. Simeon had never had any prominence in the nation, for its district lay in the thirsty Negeb, far below Hebron: a region of poor upland pastures, which had condemned it to the shepherd life of early ages. This tribe had tried to develop town life with its higher civilization, but even in the time of David had begun to abandon it again for the tent.[5] Hence, it naturally continued the connection with Judah, to which it had to look for protection from its powerful neighbours on all sides, and in which it was virtually lost.

[1] 1 Kings xii. 20. The Septuagint adds, "and the tribe of Benjamin." That the Jerusalem population were mostly Benjamites follows from Jer. vi. 1. In Ezek. xxxvii. 16, by "the children of Israel" are meant Benjamites. As a tribe Benjamin was included in the northern kingdom under Ishbosheth (2 Sam. ii. 9), and it was no less so after that kingdom had fallen (Ps. lxxx. 2). The bitterest enemies of the house of David—Saul, Shimei, and Sheba—were Benjamites. Yet part of the tribe clung to Rehoboam, apparently those in and round Jerusalem, as stated in the text. See 1 Kings xii. 21.

[2] 1 Kings xv. 22.

[3] 1 Kings xii. 29; xv. 17; xvi. 34.

[4] 2 Chron. xi. 10.

[5] 1 Chron. iv. 31.

The territory of the Twelve Tribes which were still united is calculated by Kiepert, as having been about thirteen thousand English square miles, exclusive of the Philistine territory, or of the subjugated regions outside. Of this thirteen thousand Israel occupied about ninety-four hundred, and Judah thirty-six hundred square miles. The whole area of Palestine was thus nearly equal to that of the kingdom of Holland, or of the six northern counties of England, the kingdom of Judah being rather less than Northumberland, Durham, and Westmoreland; while that of Israel was very nearly as large as Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cumberland.

Yet there were compensations. If Israel had ten tribes, it had the fatal heritage of disunion. Judah, as, virtually, a single tribe, had the priceless blessing of national and religious unity. Its kings, to the last, traced their descent in an unbroken line from David, the national hero. Whereas Israel was to have its capital successively in Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria, that of Judah was always Jerusalem; while rival temples at Dan and Bethel invited the subjects of the northern kingdom, there was only one sanctuary for its southern rival, and while a corrupt worship of Jehovah was found in Israel, alongside widespread worship of Baal, the God of their fathers was always the recognized, if too often neglected, object of southern worship.[1]

[1] In 1 Kings xi. 36, Judah is promised permanently to the House of David, that "David may have a light always, before God, in Jerusalem." This is an allusion to the Jewish idea of the sacredness of some light always remaining in a household as a symbol of its good fortune and permanence. Nothing could be more disastrous in the eyes of a Jew than the lamp going out in his family. No house, however poor, is left in darkness through the night, the mistress taking care to rise and replenish the lamp from time to time. It is a fatal omen, indeed, if it go out. "The light of the wicked," says Bildad, "shall be put out: the light shall be dark in his tent, and his lamp, above him, shall be put out." Job says: "How often is the candle (lamp) of the wicked put out!" The ruin of his country is pictured by Jeremiah as God's taking from it the light of the candle (lamp), and the mystical Babylon has the doom pronounced in the words that "the light of a candle (lamp) shall shine no more on it, at all." Job xviii. 5, 6. Prov. xiii. 9. Job xxi. 17. Jer. xxv. 10. Rev. xviii. 23.

While the territory of Rehoboam could thus take the name of only one tribe, the northern confederacy, on the other hand, might well assume the proud title of "Israel," the father of the whole race, and boast that it was, in effect, the nation. The claim was indeed virtually acknowledged by the general use of this lordly name henceforth. It was not applied to Judah till after the destruction of Samaria;[1] but from the first, even the prophets thus designated the northern kingdom. In later times, indeed, when idolatry had spread, they began to speak of Israel as Ephraim,[2] but rather from growing contempt for its apostasy, than in denial of its rank, for, to the last, it is also spoken of as Jacob, Isaac, and Joseph.[3] Its establishment is at all times recognized by them as part of the Divine economy, and its vicissitudes and revolutions, no less than the fortunes of Judah, are traced to the immediate control of Providence. Within its borders, with the exception of Jerusalem and Hebron, were all the sites dear to a Hebrew, east and west of the Jordan. A prophet had virtually inaugurated it, by Ahijah's designation of Jeroboam as its first king, and it became the special sphere of the activity of the order, for centuries after its formal commencement. For though Judah, at least after Elijah and Elisha, had more prophets who are individually noticed in Scripture, it was in Israel only, so far as we know, that they were counted by 50, 100, or 400 at a time.[4]

The hope of the prophets that the reforms, so urgently demanded in the interests of religion and popular liberty, would be secured by the establishment of the northern king-

[1] Zech. xii. 1.
[2] See Hos. and Zech., *passim*. Ps. lxxviii. 9. Isa. vii. 2; xi. 13; xxviii. 1, 3.
[3] Amos iii. 13; vi. 8; vii. 2, 5, 9, 16. Hos. xii. 2. Amos vi. 6.
[4] 1 Kings xviii. 13; xxii. 6. 2 Kings ii. 3, 5; iv. 38; vi. 1; ix. 1.

dom, was doomed to disappointment. It had been founded by revolution, and the success of Jeroboam led to the imitation of his example, so that dynasty after dynasty was overthrown by successive adventurers, generally soldiers. The dynasty of Jeroboam was extinguished by the murder of his son, by one of his generals, during the siege of a Philistine stronghold: the murderer seizing the throne; and in the same way, the crown was, generation after generation, more and more regarded as the lawful prize of the murderer of him who for the time wore it. Omri and Jehu alone were able to hand on their power to more than one generation, and with the murder of Zechariah, the last descendant of Jehu, there remained no other title to the throne than successful treason. The government of Samaria became the prize of a popular general who was able to carry out a conspiracy to gain it. The kingdom, in fact, from Jeroboam's death, was ruled by the army, not by the people; and, unhappily, no one rose with commanding genius to establish a permanent dynasty. Constant change of ruler led to constant civil wars; the military caste became all powerful; the bond holding the nation together was no longer national or tribal feeling, or religion, but the army. When Samaria fell, therefore, there was no national life to preserve the unity of the tribes as fellow-citizens: they had no lofty traditions, no associations of religious union, no remembrance of a royal house like that of David, or of a central temple, like that of Jerusalem, to keep them together as a people. With the fall of their capital, therefore, they ceased to be a nation. Those carried into exile were, to a large extent, lost among the peoples amidst whom they found themselves; many of those left in the country were absorbed into the old Canaanite population, or united with the southern Jews, as we see in

the case of the Galileans. The limitation of the power of the throne within the ancient theocratic bounds had been expected; but, instead of this, the monarchy soon became more arbitrary than before the secession. Having no adventitious support from the splendour of their own deeds or character; no borrowed lustre from an historical past; divorced from the people by their despotic rather than popular tendencies; placed, moreover, between Judah, hostile, on the south, and Syria on the north, the kings of Israel created a military monarchy; at once to repress revolution within, and guard the frontier from external attack. From the first, the soldier was the great power in the State; the chief of the army being even more powerful than in the undivided kingdom, when Joab could brave the anger of David himself. He stood next after the king, and was the recognized channel of royal favour.[1] In two cases, his great office enabled him to seize the throne itself.[2] There was no longer a pretence of relying, as of old, on infantry alone. Chariot squadrons and cavalry were now the main trust.[3] Instead of the 600 braves of David, a favoured regiment of chariots was in immediate attendance on the king,[4] each carrying a shield bearer, a driver, and the warrior himself.[5] A bodyguard protected the palace and the royal person, at once securing the safety of the king and serving as his couriers and executioners.[6] The special national weapon, however, was the bow,[7] which was as famous in Israel as it used to be in mediæval England, though the Hebrew archers differed from ours, by fighting from chariots as well as on foot.

[1] 2 Kings iv. 13.
[2] 1 Kings xvi. 16. 2 Kings ix. 5.
[3] 1 Kings xvi. 9.
[4] Roskoff, art. "Kreigsherr," Schenkel's *Lex.*
[5] The Shalishim, or "three," translated "captains."
[6] 2 Kings x. 25; ix. 25.
[7] Ps. lxxviii. 9. 2 Kings ix. 24; xiii. 15, 16.

The toleration of heathenism by Solomon had given great offence, and doubtless facilitated the secession. It was, in fact, the ground on which Ahijah had announced to Jeroboam that the rupture of the monarchy had been decreed by God.[1] Yet the kings of Israel, so far from adopting a policy of exclusiveness in favour of the old religion, not only tampered with it from the first, but maintained no precautions against the entrance of idolatry, and in not a few cases actively favoured it. The prophets, instead of being invited to counsel the throne, as Nathan and Gad had been by David, were ignored or violently resisted. Unrestrained by the checks still felt in Judah, the kings made no pretence of acting under the orders of any prophet, but were guided solely by their own ideas of policy. The conflict which Samuel had maintained with Saul was recommenced, therefore, almost at once, between his successors and the kings of Israel. Nor did it ever cease. For more than 250 years before the fall of the kingdom, there was a life-and-death struggle between the throne and the prophets, who fought nobly to guide it in the right path. Dynasties rose and fell at short intervals; most of them in the second generation; only one surviving till the fifth. The succession became, in fact, elective rather than hereditary, with all the evils of that system, and this state of things was largely due to the extraordinary action taken by the prophets, to which no parallel suggests itself but that of the dervishes in modern Oriental monarchies. One member of the order had directly incited Jeroboam to tear the nation in two, reopening the hereditary feud between "Ephraim and Judah," and had guaranteed him success, as only carrying out the decree of the Almighty. Elisha had as directly commissioned Jehu

[1] 1 Kings xi. 33.

to turn traitor, and murder not only his king, but also the whole house of Ahab, though a future prophet, Hosea, was to pronounce as sternly a curse on the house of Jehu for his remorseless cruelty. Order was, in fact, incompatible with the stability of any royal House in a kingdom like Israel, founded originally on successful revolution. Its only idea of reform was violent change of dynasty; a step not only perilous, and in the end ruinous to the State, but of very doubtful wisdom even for the end it had specially in view. The prophet, moreover, could always be sure of finding agents to carry out his secret denunciation of the reigning monarch, so that his commission, whispered to a willing conspirator, was always fatal. If the king would not follow him openly, he would pay the penalty for his revolt from the loyalty to God pressed upon him, by the loss of his crown and life, and the murderer, pledged to orthodoxy, would be seated in his place. Noble men as they were, the great prophets who largely determined the fortunes of Israel were, beyond question, in error, when they thought to advance the kingdom of God by such means, for Jehovah himself made the greatest among them understand in Horeb, when he complained of the failure of his efforts as a religious reformer, that the Divine Presence was not in the earthquake or the storm, but in the still, small voice.

Shut out from the culture and spiritual elevation, slowly attained in the south, under Samuel, David, and Solomon, the new kingdom suffered greatly from the loss of such healthful and ennobling influences. Soon after its erection, moreover, it received a heavy blow in the withdrawal of the priests and Levites to Jerusalem. To them in great measure were confined the education and refinement of the community. They were the representatives of art, law, religion,

and general knowledge. The institution of the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, instead of the homage to the Unseen which obtained in Jerusalem, was a fatal error ; induced partly by jealousy of the South, partly by unworthy concession to the popular tastes. The nation not only lost the elevating and strengthening influences of a spiritual faith, but was henceforth unable to resist the advance of heathenism, far less to overcome it. Having sanctioned it in a measure, nothing could prevent it flooding in, ever more strongly, from Phœnicia and Syria, with which the whole country was in the closest intercourse, through commerce and otherwise. The confusion of the old days of the Judges returned in a great degree by constant political revolutions ; popular ignorance and superstition grew apace where all was unsettled ; idolatry gradually took deep and wide root, and with it an immorality fatal to any people. Great prophets rose, and able kings, but they could not stay the downward progress of the nation, and it had at last to be left, by its best citizens, to sink into the ruin they could not avert.

The earlier history of the southern kingdom was very different. Small and weak, with all the evil tendencies which had led to the great secession, it yet retained not a few advantages secured under David and Solomon. The very tradition of these reigns was a priceless treasure. The kingdom was virtually a continuation of the glorious past, based on the same fundamental principles. The king was assumed to rule in harmony with the prophets and people, maintaining his dignity, but respecting public opinion and prophetic counsel ; following, in fact, while appearing to lead ; as in healthy governments in all ages. The splendour of the first two reigns, moreover, had surrounded the throne

with a halo that kept the nation loyal to the line of David for 500 years. During that long period the succession was undisputed, and the dynasty was at last overthrown only by foreign invasion. The ideal of kingly excellence in the Psalms and Proverbs of David and Solomon, and the grand loyalty of the former to his obligations as the ruler of a theocracy, were a standard for their posterity; restraining the weak or unworthy, and guiding the reforms and action of the true-hearted. The golden age, when David reigned, and Nathan and Gad stood at his side, rose abidingly before the imagination of future kings and generations. Hence public affairs were much more settled and peaceful than in the northern kingdom. Troubles might rise, but they did not shake the throne. In spite of its weakness, Judah could sustain itself a hundred years after its more powerful rival had fallen.

The secret of this tenacious national life was its comparative purity. Heathenism was kept far longer at bay than in Israel, and, when at any time it threatened to root itself in the land, it was cast out by an earnest and vigorous reaction. The idolatry introduced by Solomon was banished after a few decades; and when, at a later date, under Athaliah and Ahaz, it was once more thrust on the people, they united against it, with a new king at their head, and triumphantly restored the hereditary worship of Jehovah. The fatal strife between prophets and kings was thus avoided. Freer to utter their warnings and counsels than in Israel, these fearless witnesses for God kept alive the old faith, and with it the spiritual life of the nation. Nor did their work end with their life. How much does mankind owe to their inspired utterances preserved in the canon of Scripture!

Yet heathenism pressed ever closer. Its rigid exclusion,

however essential, was in the end impossible. Contact with idolatrous nations; the presence of an active pro-heathen party, dating from the fatal example of Solomon; the influence, too often, of a pro-heathen king and court; the tendency of baser natures to turn to any sensuous worship, beat back the ancient faith from its old supremacy, and slowly sapped its vigour. The increasing influence of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, as time passed on, strengthened this heathen element, till it became dominant. Alliances with idolatrous empires, and imitation of their religions, at once threw the ancient faith into the shade, and shewed in the decay of national worth their appropriate fruits. Even what orthodoxy survived was blighted. Under a cold and worldly priesthood favoured by the court, a superstitious ceremonial and dead ecclesiasticism gradually threw the people into spiritual sleep, in spite of the watchful and earnest care of the prophets and of the remnant of noble souls.[1]

Meanwhile the throne became steadily more unlike the grand ancient ideal, and the contrast helped to undermine it. A mad determination to throw itself into the high politics of the day, and take part in the conflicts of mighty empires, completed its ruin. With it, sank all that survived of the purer elements of national life. But the work of the prophets was seen in the clinging vitality with which these emerged from the catastrophe, while still in exile, making a return from Babylon possible, and securing the resurrection of Judaism, free from every trace of heathen influence.

Jeroboam might well be proud of his kingdom when elected to it by the national assembly at Shechem. Instead of the stony hills of Judæa, he had for his realm the fertile

[1] Isa. i. 13 ff. Jer. vii. Amos v. 21.

valleys and wooded heights of Central Palestine, the great plain of Esdraelon, the rich green hills and glens of Upper Galilee, the forests and meadows of Gilead and Bashan, and the wide pastoral uplands of Gad and Reuben. If the southern part of the Philistine plain and the mountains of Edom, with their facilities for commerce from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, remained under Rehoboam, his rival could boast of receiving tribute from half of Philistia and the rich countries of Ammon and Moab. Syria, as far as the Euphrates, formerly part of Solomon's empire, was already virtually independent. A portion of it, indeed, forming the kingdom of Damascus, had already, as we have seen, given Solomon trouble, under Rezon or Hezion, an officer of the defeated king of Zobah, and was destined, under Tabrimmon,[1] his grandson, and its future kings, to be a hereditary and deadly enemy of Israel for centuries. Gradually conquering the other Aramaic lands on this side of the Euphrates, it could at last, in the reign of Ahab, assemble thirty-two vassal princes to fight under its standard against him.[2] Hence Rehoboam seems to have maintained friendly relations with it,[3] to embarrass Jeroboam; but the astute northern ruler more than compensated himself for this stroke of policy, by securing the active support of his father-in-law, the king of Egypt, against the southern kingdom.

The first impulse of Rehoboam had been to try to win back the ten tribes by force of arms, and for this purpose he called out the whole levy of his kingdom, amounting, if the figures be correct, to 180,000 men; but the project was laid aside in obedience to a Divine warning given through

[1] 1 Kings xv. 18. "Rimmon" or "Rammon" was the Assyrian and Syrian god of the atmosphere. Tabrimmon means "Rimmon is good."

[2] 1 Kings xx. 1. [3] Graetz.

the prophet Shemaiah.[1] It was impossible, however, to prevent border feuds and petty warfare, which lasted throughout his whole reign, and that of his son.[2] Dissuaded from aggressive hostilities on a great scale, and dreading attacks from Jeroboam's Egyptian ally, or from the Philistines, who might now trouble him in his weakness, he resolved to protect the approaches to Jerusalem by a series of fifteen forts on the south, south-west, and west. Bethlehem and Tekoak, 5 miles south of it; Etham, 7 miles to the south-east of it, near Solomon's famous gardens; Socho, 18 miles south-west of the capital; Adullam, 5 miles nearer it; Bethzur, 17 miles from it, on the Hebron road; Gath, in the Philistine plains, 7 miles west of Socho; Maresha, among the hills, 6 miles south-east of Gath; Ziph, 4 miles south of Hebron, and Hebron itself, 23 miles south of Jerusalem; Adoraim, 5 miles west of Hebron; Lachish, now Tel el Hesy, 17 miles west of Adoraim, were all made defensible, evidently in anticipation of an attack from Egypt; while Azekah, Zorah, and Ajalon, at the head of the passes from the maritime plains, in the west, were likewise stockaded. The whole were, moreover, provisioned and garrisoned, but their positions revealed the smallness of the territory left to Judah, which they shew to have been confined to at most a little over twenty miles from Jerusalem, on the east, west, and south, while, on the north, it was limited to five or six. The king took also the prudent step of withdrawing a number of his sons, of whom he had twenty-eight, from the temptations of idle life at Jerusalem, and setting them over these strong posts;[3] Abijah, the son of his favourite wife, Maachah, a daughter of his uncle Absalom, being at the

[1] Kings xii. 21–24. [2] 1 Kings xiv. 30; xv. 6, 7.
[3] 2 Chron. xi. 5, 23. The distances in the text are from Kiepert's *Map*.

same time raised to the oversight of the whole royal family. The fatal error of polygamy still, however, clung to the shrunken monarchy, for not only had Rehoboam himself eighteen wives and sixty concubines, but a harem was created for each of his sons.[1]

Meanwhile, Jeroboam made Shechem his capital, and fortified it strongly, in keeping with his character as a great builder. No spot could have been more delightful for a royal residence, and it was, besides, not only the chief town of Ephraim, but the most ancient sanctuary of Israel in Palestine. Abraham himself had raised an altar in its valley; Jacob had bought land and dug his famous well in it; it contained Joseph's grave; and Joshua had caused the blessings and curses of the Law to be read from Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, on its northern and southern sides. But the Shechemites, from Jacob's day, had borne a doubtful name. They had long ago crowned Abimelech, and then turned against him; and now, it would seem, after hailing Jeroboam as their king, they early gave him trouble. Leaving a spot so unquiet, therefore, he first crossed to Penuel,[2] near the Jabbok, beyond Jordan, apparently on the northern slopes of Jebel Osha—another ancient sanctuary of the race, famous in the history of Jacob—and made it a second capital; perhaps to keep his hold on Moab and Ammon. But he soon forsook this also for Tirzah,[3] perhaps the present village Teiasar, charmingly seated among the rich green hills, twelve miles east of Samaria, and eleven north of Shechem, or possibly Talluza, a hill village six miles east of Samaria.[4] The height on which it stood, he, at once,

[1] 2 Chron xi. 18-23. [2] Gen. xxxii. 30. [3] 1 Kings xv. 33.

[4] Conder pronounces for Teiasar; Robinson, Van de Velde, and Renan, for Talluza. *Pal. Memoirs*, ii. 216. Robinson, iii. 302. Van de Velde, iii. 334. Renan's *Histoire*, ii. 157.

strongly fortified, and built a city, with a royal palace and other buildings and mansions, on so grand a scale, that the splendour of the whole vied with that of Jerusalem.[1] There had been an old Canaanite town on the hill, but it had fallen in Joshua's invasion,[2] and is not mentioned again till Jeroboam made it his capital. This honour it retained through the remainder of his reign, and under Baasha, Elah, and Zimri ; only losing it on Omri's founding Samaria. Jeroboam was buried at Tirzah, and so probably were the next three kings.

The separation of Israel from Judah had at first been merely political; the religious unity of the nation was as yet unbroken. But in this, as it seemed to Jeroboam, lay serious risk to himself and his house. The priests and Levites throughout his dominions would doubtless, as a rule, be loyal to their ecclesiastical centre in the south, and might thus exert a very dangerous influence. Indeed, the popularity of Jerusalem with the better class of the nation, was already a sign of their deep disappointment with the new kingdom, which had proved so doubtful an exchange for that which they had forsaken.[3] The people, moreover, still regarded the temple as their national sanctuary, and flocked to it in great numbers at the yearly festivals, and they might, through this, be turned again, after a time, to the House of David. The only remedy, as it seemed to Jeroboam, was to establish local religious centres in his own territories, as in the time of the Judges, and this he proceeded to do at once. The nation in those wild bygone days had worshipped Jehovah under external symbols, and would doubtless do so again. He had been accustomed, besides, to

[1] "Beautiful as Tirzah," Cant. vi. 4. Jerusalem is spoken of as also beautiful, but only after Tirzah.

[2] Josh. xii. 24.

[3] 1 Kings xii. 26. 2 Chron. xi. 16.

the worship of the sacred ox Apis, or the calf Mnevis, in Egypt, and his queen was an Egyptian. Still more, over all Western Asia, including the heathen parts of Palestine, the ox was the favourite symbol of Baal, who was known as the "heifer Baal," being worshipped not only as a god, but also as a goddess,[1] and as such Israel was already accustomed to it. He caused two golden calves, or young oxen, therefore, to be set up at the north and south of the land, proclaiming them to be emblems of Jehovah. It was a repetition of the apostasy of the golden calf at Sinai. The idea, in fact, was evidently taken from that fatal incident, for the same words were used in the inauguration of the worship: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."[2]

It is not just, however, to condemn Jeroboam as if he had taken a violent step, the full import of which was as evident to him as it is now to us, or was in after days. The temple at Jerusalem had been completed only a few years when he began his reign, and he could not have imagined he was committing a religious crime in choosing places for worship outside Jerusalem, for his own kingdom, since, in all the past, local sanctuaries had been the rule. He worshipped Jehovah, but his stay in Egypt, or his wish to copy Tyrio-Assyrian ox symbolism—encouraged, it may be, by Solomon's example in sanctioning similar idolatrous objects of worship in his heathen temples round Jerusalem—led him to coquet with idolatry by introducing his golden calves. It is

[1] Tobit i. 5. The word "heifer" is, of course, feminine. Fritsche, *Zum Mark*, s. 11. Römerb, ii. s. 440.

[2] Exod. xxxii. 4. As the symbol of the god who had brought them out of Egypt, the calf could not have represented Apis or Mnevis, Egyptian gods. As such, these would have kept the Israelites from escaping; for Egyptian gods, of course, would act for Egypt, not against it. It must, therefore, have represented the Asiatic ox-headed god, which would naturally injure Egypt, and help Israel, an Asiatic people.

to be remembered, moreover, that at Dan he saw a material and virtually idolatrous worship of the ephod, and an image, or teraphim, through which oracles were given, as in the case of the oracle kept by Gideon, so that, in his wild, dark way he might think he was justified in his action. Bethel was already an immemorial sanctuary, and at Dan, there was a body of priests, who had ministered since the days of Micah. These two places, both regarded before as holy, became henceforth, the chief centres of pilgrimage. Shiloh, as well, retained some of its ancient religious prestige, as the original seat of the Tabernacle, and the Moabite stone informs us that there was a sanctuary of Jehovah at Nebo, the Reubenite town, across the Jordan, with "vases of Jehovah," which King Mesa took away, "and dragged on the earth before Chemosh." "High places," not called temples, were raised by Jeroboam at Bethel, and no doubt elsewhere, and a priesthood, open to all, was established. Sacred circles, known by the name Gilgal, were frequented at different parts, and besides these and the other places already named, Beersheba was a point much frequented by people from the northern kingdom, as an ancient holy site.[1] Jeroboam, it is to be noted, still wished to worship Jehovah, which was natural, since the name was used for the Divine being very widely, outside Israel, besides being the name of God, especially, among the Hebrews. That the worship of Jehovah was widespread through Western Asia in this ninth century before Christ, is shewn by the names of Assyrian officials of that date of which it forms a part, and by its being part of the name of various personages of other nationalities. Thus B.C. 887 we find the name of Abijah, in Assyria, while it again occurs under the date B.C. 882. In the time

[1] Amos viii. 14.

of Sargon, in the eighth century before Christ, we have *Yau*bidi, king of Hamath, and the names of *Jo*ram, king of Edom, Zedek*iah*, king of Askalon, and Pad*iah*, king of Ekron, are also met with. Thus as early, at least, as the tenth century before Christ, the worship of Jehovah was common to all the Semitic peoples of Western Asia, as far to the east as Nineveh. His name was thus already "great among the Gentiles."[1]

This striking religious reaction proved successful in the highest degree, for all Israel, "as one man,"[2] resorted to Bethel and Dan. Naturally, however, it was abhorrent to the priests and Levites scattered through Israel; nor would they have anything to do with it. Leaving their pasture grounds and their homes in the various Levitical cities, they streamed over the southern border, strengthening the kingdom of Judah and weakening its rival.[3] To supply their places, men from all classes[4] were consecrated to the sacred offices. But the golden calves were only a part of the new system. Worship on "high places" had for ages been universal in Western Asia. On the Euphrates lofty towers had been erected, that altars might be raised on their summits,

[1] Mal., i. 11. Jahu is a name of God in the inscriptions. So, also, Ilu = El. The people of Hamath knew God as "Jahu," though they were heathen. It was apparently taken from the Hebrew, the name being adopted as that of a god of their pantheon.

There is much to say for the derivation of Jahveh from Hiphil of חיה = "the creator and the giver of life" ("Jahve" in *Bib. Lex.*)

It is not impossible, however, that it may be an Assyrian name which passed to Syrian and Hebrew alike. The attempt to trace it to an Assyrian root "to blow," "to breathe," and thus make Jehovah = Rimmon = the weather god, is repudiated by Schrader, *K.A.T.*, 2. s., and is not deserving of attention. Fried. Delitzsch supports the "Rimmon" view. Stade makes Jehovah originally a god of the Kenites, but these are only airy flights of a fanciful criticism.

[2] 1 Kings xii. 30. Ewald's translation, vol. iii. p. 472.

[3] They were not allowed, it is said, to "execute the priest's office to Jehovah;" but this must mean, to execute it in the only lawful way, without an image. Otherwise they might have continued at Bethel and Dan. 2 Chron. xi. 14.

[4] 1 Kings xii. 31. "Of the lowest" = "of all classes."

and many of the hills of Palestine had in the same way been consecrated to religious worship. The universal worship of the sun had, doubtless, as has been already said, led to this custom, such spots as were most exposed to his rays being selected for religious uses. From the nations around, the practice had passed to the Hebrews, and had become so cherished and dear to them by the usage of centuries, that it survived the building of the temple, and was nominally abolished only by the vigorous action of Josiah, just before the downfall of Judah. Altars were raised alongside the calves at Bethel and Dan, and with that of Bethel was connected a new temple, known for centuries as the royal and national sanctuary, a rival of the great temple of Jerusalem: with a distinct priesthood, ritual, and festivals, and all the pomp of the religious centre of the kingdom.[1] Thenceforward, public prayer was to be made and sacrifices and burning of incense offered there rather than at Jerusalem. Nor was this all. Eager to seduce the people from Judah and win them to the new system, he pandered with an utter unscrupulousness to their worst superstitions, and erected altars to the demons of the desert, which had always been an object of popular terror.[2] The first step of introducing the calves had opened the way to an indefinite progress towards heathenism. Ere long even Asherahs were tolerated in Israel.[3]

[1] Amos vii. 13. Ewald, vol. iii. p. 473.

[2] "Devils" 2 Chron. xi. 15; in Isa. xiii. 21; xxxiv. 14, translated "satyrs." The word comes from the verb "to fear," "to dread." In all Western Asia it was thought that hairy demons, like a goat, haunted lonely places, to spring out on unwary travellers. Lenormant, *La Magique*, p. 29. See also *Annals of Assurbanipal*. Smith and Lenormant. Rich, quoted by Gesenius, *Iesaia*, p. 466, says: "I find the belief in such demons common among the ruins of Babylon." Indeed, among what people, ancient or modern, is there not more or less superstitious fear connected with lonely desolation, especially by night?

[3] 1 Kings xiv. 15.

The inauguration of the new religion, we may readily believe, was made a great state ceremonial, like the bringing of the Sacred Ark by David to Jerusalem, or the dedication of the temple by Solomon. It was determined also to establish a great religious feast as a counter-attraction to that of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, but held a month later; perhaps from the harvest being later in the high-lying central parts than in the lower districts associated east and west with Jerusalem; the first celebration being appointed for the time of the opening ceremonies. Henceforth, the fifteenth day of the eighth month, instead of the fifteenth day of the seventh month, was to be the great Harvest Home of Israel. As to the Passover and Pentecost, celebrating the Exodus and the wheat harvest, they were from this time to fall into disuse in the northern kingdom; but the Passover, at least, never did so in Judah, and proved a strong link in after times between the North and South, in spite of Jeroboam's astuteness. As yet, however, notwithstanding the introduction of the calves, the worship of Jehovah was supreme in Israel, but there was, nevertheless, a great danger of future idolatry. Symbolism was a direct step towards it, and prepared the way for its full introduction.

Naturally, therefore, the first momentous step, so pregnant with future evil, at once roused the zeal of the prophets. They rightly saw in it a surrender of that spiritual conception of God which had been slowly built up in the popular mind from the days of Samuel. Their sorrow and anger were the keener, from their having promoted the rending of the kingdom, in the hope of restoring religion to a higher position than it had latterly held under Solomon. As Jeroboam proceeded, moreover, in his course, their opposition became stronger, till open resistance broke

out between them and the king, to be continued henceforth, under his successors, while the monarchy survived.

On the set day, Jeroboam, imitating Solomon by acting as high priest, had approached the altar on the hill of Bethel, to inaugurate the new worship by burning incense, when suddenly an unknown prophet from Judah appeared, denouncing the innovations, and predicting the birth of a prince of the line of David, who would offer on the altar thus set up, the bones of the priests who had ministered before it. As a sign that he spoke with Divine authority, the altar was rent in two at his word, and the ashes of the sacrifices scattered. Furious at the interruption, and especially at its tenor, Jeroboam would fain have seized the daring intruder; but his arm, we are told, was withered as he sought to lay hold on him, and was only healed at the prophet's intercession. Disappearing as suddenly as he came, after refusing the king's hospitality, as that offered by an idolater in a polluted land, the messenger, in his own fate illustrated the terrible exactness of obedience demanded by Divine commands. Persuaded against his better judgment, by one who certainly meant him no harm, but failed to realize the obligation imposed on him, he unthinkingly disobeyed in an apparently innocent particular, the directions given him, and perished as the result of his waywardness. He had brought on himself the curse denounced against the country at large for its apostasy.[1] An incident so sad lingered long in the popular memory. By those loyal to Jehovah, the altar was deemed permanently accursed. It had been rent in two on the day of its inauguration: it was again torn asunder by an earthquake in the days of Amos, nearly 200 years later;[2] and at last, when the northern kingdom

[1] Kings xiii. 1–32. [2] Amos ix. 1.

had fallen. Josiah, after burning the high place and a lewd Asherah image near at hand, overthrew the whole structure; grinding its very stones to dust, and burning on them, as the uttermost defilement, the bones of the priests, once its ministers, but long ago laid to rest in the rock-hewn graves of the valley beneath.[1] The spot where the prophet—perhaps Iddo—met his death, was also kept in popular remembrance, for even in Josiah's day his tombstone was yet pointed out.[1]

A Veiled Woman.

Few incidents are recorded of the struggle between Jeroboam and the prophets, which ended in the final and complete rupture between the king and "the men of God." But one which happened after the capital had been removed to Tirzah, illustrates the relations that soon prevailed between them. Abijah, the heir to the kingdom, had fallen sick amidst the vines and olive gardens of the new royal abode. Tenderly fond of him, Jeroboam yearned to know whether he would recover, and determined to apply to the prophet Ahijah, at Shiloh, who had first told him he should be king. His wife, the Egyptian princess, with a mother's eagerness, resolved to be the messenger; but knowing how matters stood between Ahijah and

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16. [2] 2 Kings xxiii. 17, 18.

her husband, she thought it best to disguise herself before setting out. Taking with her, therefore, as the customary present on consulting the prophet, only a simple gift becoming a poor woman, of ten loaves, some buns,[1] or raisin cakes, and a jar of debash, or grape-syrup, she set out for Shiloh, about eighteen miles south from Tirzah, over the hills. But Ahijah, now old and blind, had been divinely warned beforehand of her approach, and greeted her at once, on her entrance, as the wife of Jeroboam. Then followed an interview sad in the extreme. Her visit, he told her, was useless, and her gift could not be accepted. He would have nothing to do with her husband, but stood aloof from him, as one who had violated the condition on which he had been raised to the throne. Instead of doing only what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, he had exceeded all before him in wickedness, by worshipping the invisible God under the symbol of an ox that eateth grass.[2] The royal house was irrevocably doomed; every male belonging to it should die. The boy for whom she inquired so earnestly would alone escape the calamities of his family, by dying before they came. He would pass away as she re-entered Tirzah. "All Israel, however, would mourn for him: for he only of Jeroboam would come to the grave, because in him alone there was found some good thing towards Jehovah, the God of Israel, in the house of Jeroboam."[3]

Meanwhile Rehoboam, in the southern kingdom, apparently sobered by his misfortunes, had for three years[4] acted loyally to the national faith. But it is hard to turn out of a false course. Trained by an idolatrous mother, the master of a harem which perhaps included heathen

[1] The Septuagint adds, "for the children." 1 Kings xiv. 3.
[2] Ps. cvi. 20. [3] 1 Kings xiv. 13. [4] 2 Chron. xi. 17.

princesses, and inheriting the results of the introduction of idolatry into Jerusalem by his father, he soon gave himself up to it, and broke away from the old religion.[1] Additional high places for idols were built; images and consecrated cones of stone were raised to Baal, and Asherahs to the lewd goddess of fertility, "on every high hill and under every green tree." Heathenism in its worst characteristics was let loose on the land. Male and female temple-prostitutes were tolerated, to swell the revenues of the idol priests.[2] But Providence had its terrible retribution in store. Stirred up, doubtless, as already said, by his son-in-law, Jeroboam—Shishak, or Sesonchis, "dear to Amon," as the inscriptions call him, one of the kings of Egypt of the Bubastis dynasty, invaded Judah in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, with 1,200 chariots, 60,000 cavalry, and a huge army of Libyans, Ethiopian cave-men,[3] and Nubians, and, easily breaking through the circle of outlying posts, appeared under the walls of Jerusalem, which only escaped formal surrender by submitting to the most humiliating conditions. The wealth stored in the temple, the famous gold shields taken from Syria by David, those made by Solomon for his bodyguard, and all the treasures of the king's palace, were exacted by the invader as the ransom of the city, and Rehoboam was virtually reduced to the position of a vassal of Egypt.[4] So hopelessly had the division of the kingdom destroyed the glory of the days of Solomon. Israel was once more threatened with an Egyptian bondage.

An interesting memorial of this great disaster may still be seen on the walls of a small temple built by Rameses III., on

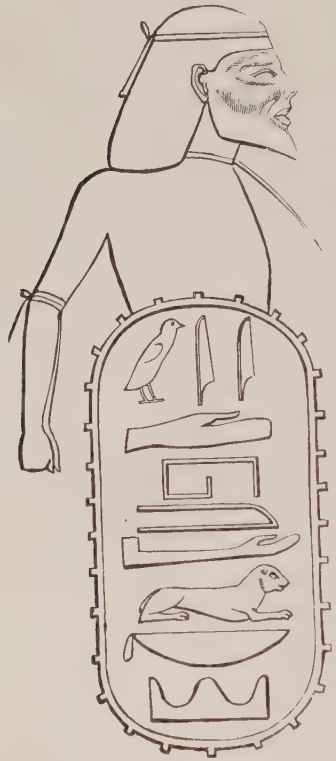
[1] 2 Chron. xii. 1, 14.

[2] 1 Kings xiv. 22-24.

[3] Mühlau und Volck, on word Sukkîm.

[4] 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26. 2 Chron. xii. 2-9. From verse 8 it follows that Judæa henceforth, for a time at least, paid tribute to Egypt.

the south side of the great temple of Karnac, at Thebes, where I have seen it. The smaller building was finished by Shishak himself, after his victory over Rehoboam. Its walls are covered inside and out with sculptures, amongst which occurs the only direct and indisputable reference to Jewish history found on the monuments of Egypt. In one part the king, drawn on a gigantic scale, stands holding in his hands a train of prisoners, while the god Amon comes to meet him with another file of captives led by cords tied round their necks, the ends held in his hand. The figures, eleven in number, are of half length, terminating in shields, on which are painted the names of the cities taken from Judah. It was formerly thought that one of these figures bore the name of the Jewish king himself, but the inscriptions on all prove to be only a list of captured towns, some of them those which Rehoboam had so carefully fortified.



COMMEMORATION OF THE CONQUEST OF "THE ROYAL CITY OF JUDAH," THAT IS, JERUSALEM, BY SHISHAK.—*From the Portico at Karnac.*

Canon Rawlinson thinks the profile is that of Rehoboam himself. *Bib. Educator*, vol. i. p. 106.

Some of the towns on the list are, naturally, in Judah, but

several are in the territory of the Ten Tribes, which Shishak might have been expected to spare, since Jeroboam was his ally and friend. But these towns prove to have been either Levitical or Canaanite, and it would seem from this that Jeroboam did not get quiet possession of all his future kingdom. The Levites appear to have held to Rehoboam,[1] and the remnant of the Canaanites probably made a last struggle for independence.

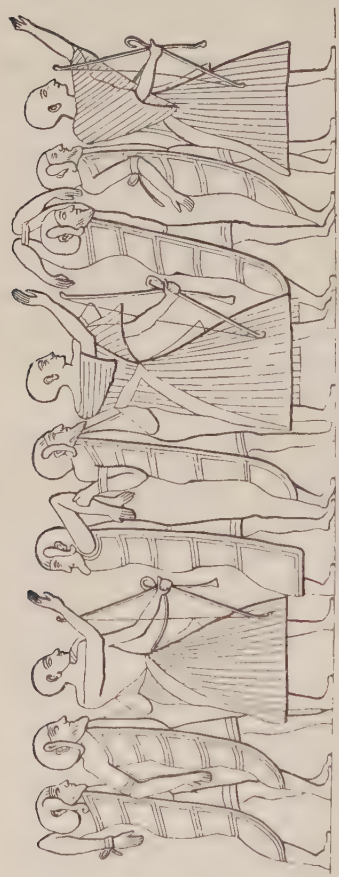
Against these two classes of towns, therefore, in Northern Israel, Shishak directed his arms, handing them over to Jeroboam when he had taken them.

A pompous hieroglyphic inscription proclaims the praise of Amon for having subdued the nations of the south and north before him, so that their kings had cast themselves on the earth at his feet. The marriage of Solomon with the Egyptian princess had been of no avail to secure lasting peace with the Pharaohs. The very palace he had built for her in Jerusalem was now plundered, five years after his death, by an Egyptian king, her relation.

The greatness of Israel had thus faded like a short-lived dream. The Philistines and Edomites doubtless took advantage of Rehoboam's weakness to regain their independence. Hadad of Idumæa, no less than Jeroboam, was supported by Shishak. But with the loss of Edom the rich sea-trade to Ophir was at once closed, for there was no longer access to the port at Ezion-geber. The greatest source of revenue was thus cut off. Nor was the situation more cheering in other directions. The trade in horses and chariots carried on between Egypt and the Euphrates could not be continued; the revolt of the Ten Tribes and the independence of Damascus, having closed the caravan

[1] 2 Chron. xi. 13.

routes to the north. The poverty of the land, as compared with its wealth under Solomon, was unconsciously proclaimed by Rehoboam himself. The golden shields of his guard having gone to enrich the Pharaoh, he had to content himself with others of brass,[1] which, in his vanity, were borne before him by his guards, as if things were unchanged from his father's days.[2]



PRISONERS LED OFF BY AN EGYPTIAN ARMY.

Seventeen years of this tinsel sovereignty passed away, before Rehoboam, at the age of fifty-eight, found a dignified rest in the royal tomb in the City of David, beside his great ancestors.[3] But his death brought no advantage to Judah. His successor, Abijah, was the son of Absalom's daughter, Maachah, Rehoboam's favourite wife.[4] More warlike than his father, he took up the feud between North and South, and kindled it into new fierceness by a bloody war, to the grievous

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 27.
[2] *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 53.
[3] 1 Kings xiv. 31.
[4] 1 Kings xv. 1-8.

injury of both kingdoms. What could be hoped for the nation if its two sections, by weakening each other, made both an easy prey to the common enemies round? Abijah's short reign of three years was spent in a bitter struggle with Jeroboam, resulting in the capture of Bethel, and the two small towns of Jeshanah and Ephrain, or Ophra, in its vicinity. Had he at once destroyed the calf temple at the former, some good might have followed. As it was, Bethel before long fell again into the hands of Israel. There was, indeed, a momentary flicker of brighter light in the position of Judah, but it was only passing. All the elements of decay were still at work. Abijah formed an alliance with Damascus to paralyze Jeroboam by threatening his rear; but to seek the help of a state which had lately been a vassal of Solomon was itself a profound humiliation. Such a power, moreover, was naturally the common enemy of both Judah and Israel, equally ready to help either, with the sole aim of weakening the other, and thus in the end overpowering both. The evils of polygamy in the palace still continued, for Abijah had fourteen wives and thirty-eight sons and daughters.[1] Nor was there any repression of the heathen abuses[2] introduced by Solomon, and increased under Rehoboam. The worst evils threatened the nation through the weakness and guilt of their princes. The mass of the people might as yet be loyal to Jehovah,[3] thanks to the lingering influence of David,[4] but the poison was slowly working which would in the end ruin all.

Abijah was succeeded by his son, or, as some think it should be, his brother, Asa,[5] who proved a much worthier

[1] 2 Chron. xiii. 21. [2] 1 Kings xv. 3. [3] 2 Chron. xii. 12. [4] 1 Kings xv. 4.

[5] In 2 Chron. xv. 16, Maachah, the mother of Abijah, is said to have been the mother of Asa also. Graetz thinks it should be "brother;" others, that for "mother" we should read "grandmother." Yet Maachah is said to have been

king. Jeroboam had still two years to live, but had been weakened by Abijah, and was not in a condition to trouble Judah any longer. Nothing is told us respecting his death, except that he was buried honourably in the royal sepulchre, doubtless at Tirzah. But

> "The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

His strong character determined the whole future of Israel. He had made it a military monarchy, and such it continued. For political ends he had reintroduced the use of symbols into the worship of Jehovah, and thus entered on a course which ended in the formal establishment of heathenism by Omri and Ahab. However little, therefore, he may have intended to promote idolatry, the terrible indictment was rightly associated thenceforth for ever with his name, of having caused Israel to sin.

The instability and hollowness of Jeroboam's position was seen at once on his death. His firm hand had been able to suppress all open disaffection while he lived, but he had sown the wind, and his son, Nadab, reaped the whirlwind. Chagrin at the sinking glory of the nation, intensified by the victory of Judah in late years; the necessity of relying on the army, in a kingdom which had no prescription from the past; the difficulty of acting where the situation was in all respects so new, had doubtless disquieted the whole life of Jeroboam. Upheld by the soldiery, the throne was necessarily at its mercy, and this was felt in the camp. The king for the hour, was, in fact, only the elected of the troops, like the Roman emperors in the worst times. The

"queen mother," that is, reigning mother of the king, under Asa, and this she could not have been as his grandmother. His own mother would in that case have been named.

people had no longer any political rights. Two years sufficed to bring all these seething elements of revolt to a head. Nadab had undertaken the siege of the Levitical town of Gibbethon, probably the present village "Kibbieh," west of Tibneh, on the hills above the Philistine plain, in a line with Jerusalem, and things had not apparently prospered under him. This was enough. Discontent in the camp found expression in a successful military conspiracy headed by Baasha, a man of Issachar, one of Nadab's officers, who, after murdering him, ascended his throne. The curse pronounced on the house of Jeroboam by Ahijah of Shiloh now, at last, fell on it suddenly. To secure his position, Baasha, like Oriental kings generally, ordered the execution of every male of the fallen dynasty, and they were exterminated forthwith ; some in Tirzah, where they were left lying in their blood in the streets, for the town dogs to eat ; some in the country, where they were allowed in uttermost ignominy to remain unburied, the foul vultures gorging themselves on their corpses.[1] So perished the house of Jeroboam after a tenure of the throne for twenty-four years.

[1] 1 Kings xiv. 11.

CHAPTER II.

ASA, JEHOSHAPHAT, AND THE HOUSE OF OMRI.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
BAASHA, ...	B.C. 953–930	916–893	945–922
ELAH, ...	930–929	893–892	922–920
ZIMRI, ...	929	892	920
	(7 days.)	(7 days.)	(7 days.)
TIBNI AND OMRI, . . .	929–925	892–888	920–918
OMRI, *alone*, ...	925–918	888–877	918–913
		Samaria made the capital, 882.	
AHAB, ...	918–898	877–856	913–890

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
ASA, ...	B.C. 955–914	919–878	948–909
JEHOSHAPHAT, ...	914–889	878–853	909–883

Riehm gives the following parallels:

Nadab's accession is reckoned as in the second year of Asa (917).

Baasha's accession falls in the third year of Asa (916).

Asa's victory over Zerah (Ethiopian) is assigned to the tenth year of his reign (909).

Elah's accession falls in the twenty-sixth year of Asa (893).

Zimri's seven days' reign falls in the twenty-seventh year of Asa (892).

Omri's accession falls in the thirty-first year of Asa (888).

The defeat of Benhadad II., at Aphek, falls in the year 858, the twentieth of Jehoshaphat.

The alliance of Ahab and Jehoshaphat against Benhadad is assigned to 856, the twenty-second year of Jehoshaphat.

ASA had been two years on the throne of Judah; Rehoboam had been dead for five years, and his son, Abijah, for

two, when the conspiracy of Baasha swept away the house of Jeroboam, and the new dynasty seated itself in Tirzah. But the revolution had been the work of the army alone, without any action on the part of the people, and hence had no bearing, or very little, on the social prosperity of the country. The sunny hills of Israel still dropped sweet wine; the ploughman overtook the reaper, and the treading of the grapes was swiftly followed by the sowing of new harvests;[1] for the richness of the land had not as yet been neutralized by the degeneracy of the nation. What policy the adventurer who had grasped supreme power would adopt, was, however, all important. Unfortunately for both North and South, the dream of Israel since the secession had been to conquer Judah and restore the ancient kingdom of Saul, as Ishbosheth had tried to do. For this, Shishak had been stirred up against Rehoboam, during whose reign much blood had flowed on both sides. Jeroboam, while pursuing the same dream, had closed his life in the shame of inglorious defeat at the hands of Abijah. Nadab's offence was his having failed to restore the honour of the army. Baasha had only one course open to him: to lead the soldiery, his masters, to victory. Hence the long fratricidal war against Judah was continued, either in petty border feuds or in great campaigns, during his whole reign of twenty-four years;[2] making, in all, nearly fifty years of hostilities since the separation of the kingdoms.

Meanwhile, Asa was still reigning in Jerusalem with vigour and in a true theocratic spirit. The first ten years after his accession, though doubtless troubled by border feuds between his people and Israel, had been comparatively quiet.[3] Reflecting the wishes of the best part of his

[1] Amos ix. 13. [2] 1 Kings xv. 32. [3] 2 Chron. xiv. 1.

subjects, he reversed the policy of the preceding kings, and took for an ideal his great ancestor, David. Setting his face earnestly against heathenism, he destroyed the idol altars which had been raised by those before him; levelled many of the high places,[1] broke down the symbolic Baal-pillars; cut down the Asherahs, and removed the "sun images" made by his father throughout the kingdom; at the same time officially restoring the exclusive worship of Jehovah.[2] Public opinion supported him in this enforced reformation, which was effected without opposition.[3] Things had indeed come to a sad state. Maachah, the queen mother, and as such—like the Sultana Valide of the Turkish Court—the most important personage in the State after the king, had been the eager patroness of the heathenism that had prevailed. She had erected a "horrible thing"—that is, an obscene symbol—to Asherah. This was now burnt to ashes, and strewn in the brook Kedron, as the ashes of the golden calf had been poured into the brook at Sinai by Moses and Aaron,[4] and Maachah herself was deposed from her high dignity.[5] The gifts dedicated by Asa's father to Jehovah had been taken into their own sanctuaries by the idol priests, but were now removed, and replaced, with additional gifts of the king, in the temple. The great brazen altar, which had likewise been used for idol sacrifices, was purified, and restored to its place.[6]

But though such a great religious revolution strengthened the kingdom greatly, it could not at once remove all the perils to which it was exposed. The warlike Baasha threat-

[1] That is, those raised to idols. The high places dedicated to the worship of Jehovah were still left.

[2] 2 Chron. xiv. 2–5.

[3] 2 Chron. xiv. 5.

[4] Exod. xxxii. 20.

[5] 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16.

[6] 1 Kings xv. 15. 2 Chron. xv. 8.

ened danger from the north; Ethiopia and Egypt imperilled the country from the south. The tribute paid to the Pharaohs since Rehoboam's defeat may have been refused by Asa, or Baasha may have stirred up the Nile power; in any case, an alarming invasion flooded the land. Jerusalem had anew been girdled by fortified towns which protected it, in a measure, but its main human defence was in the vigour and fearless bravery of the king. An Egyptian invasion was made under a leader whose name in Scripture is Zerah, and who is described as "the Ethiopian." The dynasty of Bubastis was then on the throne of the Nile kingdom, as the twenty-second in the long record of the line of Egyptian royalty. No monarch of the name of Zerah is, however, known, and it has been thought that it must be a contraction of that of Osorkon, which would be written O-serek-on, thus in its central portion coming so near Zerah that it has been accepted by men like Lepsius and Ebers as a sufficient identification of the two. As the son or descendant of Shishak, the invader of Palestine under Rehoboam, he may well have undertaken a second campaign against it, and it is noteworthy that the inscriptions make special mention of Osorkon II. having made war against Syria and Palestine.[1] If this, as appears probable, point to "Zerah," he would, as crown prince, be known by the title "King's son of Cush," or Ethiopia, and this with the fact that Ethiopian and Libyan contingents served in his army would easily cause him to be spoken of as "the Ethiopian," though, in fact, no Ethiopian House ruled in those times on the Nile. The invasion was very formidable, though it seems as if some error had crept into the manuscript in giving the

[1] "Zerah," by Ebers, in Riehm. E. Naville's *Bubastis* (Egyptian Exploration Fund), 1891, p. 51.

number of the army as a million foot, besides three hundred chariots, for it seems as if the Jewish king, who had routed such a vast array, could hardly have needed to call in aid from Syria against the much feebler assault of Israel. Whatever its strength, however, Asa met the foe at the head of the whole muster of the kingdom, and inflicted on him a severe defeat near Mareshah, on the south-west Maritime Plain. The higher tone of the nation shewed itself in its valour, which recalled that of the great times of David. The pursuit reached to Gerar, and ended in the utter rout of the invaders, while the victors took and sacked town after town that had been tributary to Egypt; inflicting severe chastisement at the same time on the Arab tribes who had assisted the enemy, and driving off their great flocks and herds, of sheep and cattle.[1] A true-hearted ruler had fought in reliance on the aid of the invisible King of the land, and had triumphed.

The victory of Asa over the Egypto-Ethiopian invasion, however, did not prevent great trouble, in later years, from his northern foe. Driven on, it may be, by restlessness under his sway through the wide bounds of the Ten Tribes, or as a shorter policy to keep his army from revolt at home by giving their lawlessness vent in war against Judah, Baasha organized a grand invasion of the small southern kingdom. The only known result of this, however, was the capture of Ramah,[2] on the military and caravan road, six miles north

[1] 2 Chron. xiv. 15. Asa's army is said to have numbered 580,000 men, but Kennicott has pointed out (*Hebrew Text of the Old Testament Considered*) that the copyists often fell into error by the different ways of marking numbers, and by confounding the different letters which denoted them, several of which are very like each other. Hence in the Vulgate printed at Venice, in 1486, and in the old Latin version of Josephus, we find, to quote an illustration, the armies of Abijah and Jeroboam reduced from 400,000 and 800,000 men respectively, to 40,000 and 80,000, while the number of the slain is reduced from 500,000 to 50,000.

[2] In 2 Chron. xvi. 1, this invasion of Baasha is said to have taken place in the

of Jerusalem. This post he fortified strongly, to blockade Jerusalem, hoping thus to reduce it to submission by cutting it off from communication with the north, on which its food and general prosperity depended. In this extremity, Asa, forgetful of the assurance of Divine protection, turned despairingly to the Syrian, Benhadad I. of Damascus, the successor of Rezon and Tabrimmon, whose kingdom was growing rapidly into great power. Collecting all the silver and gold left in the treasuries of the temple and palace, after the enormous ransom paid by Rehoboam to Shishak, he sent them as tribute to Benhadad, to purchase his support against Baasha. Only too glad to weaken the Hebrews, lately the lords of his country, Benhadad at once invaded Northern Israel, and ravaged the country on both sides of the Jordan, taking, among others, the towns of Ijon [1] in the central heights of Lebanon, Dan [2] and Abel-maim at the foot of Hermon, and most of those on the borders of the Sea of Galilee and throughout Naphtali.[3] Attacked thus in his rear, Baasha was forced precipitately to abandon the blockade of Jerusalem, and march to the defence of his own dominions.[4] The relief to Judah was immediate and complete, but it was dearly bought. Henceforth, till the rise of Assyria, the kings of Damascus were able to interfere in the internal affairs of each of the Jewish kingdoms by turns, to

thirty-sixth year of Asa. But Baasha died in Asa's twenty-sixth year. Thenius, Bertheau, and Ewald offer conjectural emendations of this date, but it is impossible to fix it with confidence. See Thenius on 1 Kings xv. 16. Bertheau on 2 Chron. xv. 19. Ewald's *Geschichte*, vol. iii. pp. 165, 186. Art. "Asa," Schenkel's *Lex.*

[1] Oliphant, followed by Conder, identifies Ijon as a place in Lebanon. He says that it gave its name to a plain 4,750 feet above the sea, and that this plain is eight to ten miles long and from three to four broad, embosomed among hills. It is one of the richest tracts in Syria, and even now is an unbroken expanse of wheat, beans, and lentils in summer. It was at the very north of Naphtali. Its name is still "Ayun." *Gilead*, p. 17.

[2] *Land and Book*, p. 250.

[3] 1 Kings xv. 20. 2 Chron. xvi. 4.

[4] 1 Kings xv. 18–21. 2 Chron. xvi. 5.

the great hurt of both. Asa had committed the great error, moreover, of forgetting his own words, "that it was nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power,"[1] and instead of trusting in Him, as he had formerly done in the Egyptian invasion, had sought aid from a heathen. Such a sin even in so good a man brought a deserved rebuke from a prophet, bearing the name of Jehu. "He had done foolishly. Henceforth he would have wars"—a prediction only too sadly fulfilled in the reigns of his successors.[2] But for the moment, the prophet paid the penalty of his boldness by being put in the stocks; even Asa finding it hard to realize at all times the prophetic ideal of absolute faith in God,[3] and turning with ruffled pride against the true-hearted seer, who, with a noble jealousy of the honour of the fatherland and the true interests of the future, had denounced his action.

Hastily calling out the whole military levy of Judah, Asa took steps, without a moment's delay, to prevent the recurrence of the danger from which he had escaped. Razing to the ground the fortifications of Ramah, he built with their materials strong forts on the two hills, Geba and Mizpeh, commanding both sides of the Jerusalem road, a little nearer the city, and hewed out in them huge reservoirs for water, in case of a siege.[4]

Thus the reign of Baasha, like that of Jeroboam and Nadab, ended in military disgrace and dishonour, in spite of a vigour and capacity which enabled him to keep his seat on the throne till his death. He might have chosen the

[1] 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

[2] The war with Baasha seems also to have continued for a time, since the "cities of Ephraim," taken by that monarch, 2 Chron. xvii. 2, can hardly refer to events before the destruction of Ramah.

[3] 2 Chron. xiv. 7–11.

[4] Jer. xli. 9.

part of a true theocratic king, putting away the calf worship of Bethel and Dan, and loyally serving Jehovah, who had raised him "from the dust" to be king over His people. In that case the renewed moral strength of the nation would have brought lasting prosperity. But after murdering the family of Jeroboam, he had continued the offence of that prince, and thus drew down on his own posterity the same curse, which Jehu, the prophet, fearless like the rest of his order, did not hesitate to pronounce. He himself, however, died in peace at Tirzah, and had honourable burial in the royal tombs.

Elah, his son, by his worthlessness, invited the doom which soon overtook his House. The times demanded a strong ruler, but he was only an enervated debauchee. Leaving his kingdom and his army to themselves, he stayed carousing at Tirzah. But hardly two years passed before his career was abruptly ended. The town of Gibbethon, probably the present village "Kibbieh," west of Tibneh or Timnathah, was again being besieged,[1] and there was once more treason in the camp. Baasha had been the general-in-chief. This time the traitor was Zimri, the commander of one of the two brigades of chariots. Driving off with sufficient force to Tirzah, he came on Elah while he was drinking deeply[2] in the house of his steward, Arza, and slew him. Then followed the common Eastern massacre of the family, including not only Elah's children and his brothers and sisters, but all their kinsmen, and even their friends; only the queen and the ladies of the harem, apparently, being spared. But vengeance was soon on the track of the murderer. Zimri had usurped the throne without the sanction of the army, and this was bitterly resented. Choosing Omri,

[1] Page 35.

[2] Literally, making himself "more drunk."

the general-in-chief, for king, the camp broke up the siege of Gibbethon, and marching to Tirzah, invested it. The city itself was soon taken, but the palace still held out. Seeing its fate certain, however, Zimri determined to defraud his enemies, in a measure, of their triumph, by seeking his own death. Retiring to the "castle" or harem of the palace, the innermost building, presumably to revel for the last few moments of his life with its unfortunate inmates, he caused the whole palace to be set on fire, and perished, with his last victims, amidst the flames.[1]

But Omri's victory was not yet secured. The people had hitherto taken no part in the frequent revolutions effected by the army. Now, however, a popular candidate for the throne appeared—Tibni, the son of Ginath, a man otherwise unknown, who was bravely supported by his brother Joram.[2] At last, to the evils of mere dynastic struggles were added those of civil war, for the nation was divided between the competitors for its sovereignty, and fought stoutly on both sides for four years. At length Omri prevailed, Tibni and his brother being slain,[3] and Omri became sole monarch of the desolated country.

Asa had been encouraged in his reforms by the prophets, one of whom, Azariah, the son of Oded, is specially mentioned. The sight was thus once more offered, of the two great powers in the kingdom—the spiritual and temporal—working in harmony; and such a spectacle, added to the vigour and success of Asa, in his wars, had its natural effect. The northern kingdom, distracted by revolutions, ruled by the army, and sinking more and more into a mere heathen State, had lost its charms for the more thoughtful among its

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 18. [2] 1 Kings xvi. 22. Septuagint.
[3] 1 Kings xvi. 22. Septuagint.

people. A strong emigration hence set in from Ephraim and Manasseh,[1] strengthening Asa no less than it weakened the Ten Tribes. Many of the Simeonites also, forsaking their tent life in the south, settled in Judah. And now, peace being restored, the king resolved to complete his good work of re-establishing the old faith. In the fifteenth year of his reign, a great public assembly of all the population, native or immigrant, was summoned: sacrifices from the spoils of his battles were offered to Jehovah, the true God, and the whole multitude pledged themselves, amidst the sound of trumpets and cornets, to worship Him alone, and to put to death any who sanctioned idolatry.[2] So stern was Mosaism in its early ages.

The closing years of Asa's reign seem to have been marked by a peaceful prosperity to which the country had long been a stranger. He had committed the grave error of calling in the Syrians against Baasha, but for the time this had wrought well, for, at the accession of Omri, Judah held a number of Israelitish towns in the hill country of Ephraim.[3] Ascending the throne in the last year of Jeroboam, he lived till the eleventh year of Omri, if, indeed, he did not, as some think, survive him, and he had seen the fall of Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Tibni. So strongly did the stability of Judah contrast with the revolutionary changes of Israel.

In Zimri the northern kingdom seemed to have fallen into utter confusion, after a duration of only fifty years. The civil war with Tibni once more, however, called out the manly virtues of the people, for Omri was no mere nominee of the army, but the chosen king of the more vigourous half of the population. Apart from his own special capacity, it was to this his house was in great measure indebted for such

[1] 2 Chron. xv. 9. [2] 2 Chron. xv. 10-14. [3] 2 Chron. xv. 8.

a hold on public sympathy as upheld it for four reigns. Yet each of his descendants only increased the calamities of the future by forsaking more and more completely the ancient religion and the laws of the constitution.

The palace at Tirzah being burned down, and the easy fall of the town having shewn the weakness of its position, Omri resolved to choose a new capital; the troublesome restlessness of the people of Shechem forbidding him to return thither. The selection he made shews his sagacity. Six miles north-west from Shechem, a well-watered valley, which is, in fact, a continuation of that in which Shechem itself stands, opens out into a lovely plain, about five miles across, embosomed among green hills. In the centre of this there rises, like a boss on a great buckler, an oblong and almost entirely isolated hill, of white limestone, to the height of about four hundred feet. Flat on the top, so as to give space for architectural display—though this may be due to artificial levelling, in some measure—it sinks, on the east, in long gentle slopes to the plain, but is steep and abrupt on all other sides, though terraced in every direction for gardens; perhaps originally for defence.[1] Indeed, the escarpments of ancient fortification seem still plain at many points. The soft hills that surround it on all sides, beyond the velvet plain, are among the richest of Palestine, and are intersected by a network of fertile valleys, larger and smaller. In our times the central hill would be untenable if any hostile force gained possession of these encircling heights, but in Omri's time it must have been almost unassailable, except by blockade, which might subdue its defenders through cutting off their supplies of food. The whole of this hill was bought by Omri from one Shemar, whose name may yet

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, XV. viii. 5.

linger in that of the city which presently crowned it—Samaria, or, rather, Shomĕron, which, however, was well chosen for its own meaning, which is, virtually, "The Guard." The price paid for this grand site, we are told, was two talents, or about six hundred pounds,[1] but the purchasing price of money was then so much greater than it is now, that this sum would apparently be equal, in Omri's time, to at least twelve thousand pounds to-day. Its choice must have been as great a blow to Shechem as the transference of metropolitan dignity to Windsor would be to London, or as the selection of Versailles for such an honour would be to Paris, but military considerations shewed it was a thoroughly wise step. The palace and citadel occupied the top of the hill, and the town, hereafter the Samirina of the Assyrians,[2] extended down its slopes; a strong wall, along the top of which ran a broad path,[3] encircling the whole. From the palace above the town, Omri could look away to the Mediterranean on the west, the crest of the hill being more than 1,500 feet above its level. On the other sides there was a varied panorama of rounded hills and gentle valleys.[4] On the south was the royal "paradise," with its springs and rich gardens. A leper colony, like that still seen under the walls of Jerusalem, lived outside the gates, as indeed it does to this day; and a wide open space before these gates—one of which, at the foot of the hill, is still marked by its foundation stones—as in all Eastern cities, afforded fitting place on the green plain, for great ceremonials, when the king appeared in state.[5] The houses of the town were at first of brick, with beams and rafters of the common sycamore; but, as wealth increased, these largely gave way to

[1] Thenius. [2] Schrader. *Keilinschriften*, p. 93.
[3] 2 Kings vi. 26, 30. [4] Amos iii. 9. [5] 1 Kings xxii. 10.

mansions of hewn stone and cedar.[1] In its palmy days Samaria must have presented an imposing appearance from the valleys and hills around; its streets standing out against the slopes of the hill, in girdling lines.[2]

The popular support of Omri was justified by the shrewd sense and vigour of his policy, than which, apart from its religious bearings, nothing could have been more fitted to restore the prosperity of the country or secure its peace.

SAMARIA.
W. C. P. Medlycott, *pinx.*

Judah and Israel had been more or less at war for nearly fifty years, and it was at last evident that reunion was hopeless, whether voluntarily or by compulsion; while the result in mutual injury was beyond calculation. Omri, therefore,

[1] Isa. ix. 9, 10.

[2] Omri very possibly settled Samaria in part with his soldiers, as David had done at Jerusalem. Graetz says he left Tirzah for Samaria a year after his victory over Tibni; but in 1 Kings xvi. 23, it says he reigned six years in Tirzah. Ewald thinks that of these six years, four passed in war, two as sole king, and that he afterwards reigned ten years in Samaria—in all sixteen years.

determined to reverse the policy of his predecessors on this point, and seek peace with the southern kingdom. Even Baasha, with all his vigour and capacity, had wrecked his dynasty against the barren mountains of Judah. Omri would try what the olive branch would do. Firmly seated in his new capital, which almost defied a siege, he concluded a peace with Asa,[1] and made its continuance one of the great features of the policy of his house. Unfortunately, it had no deeper or nobler basis than to enable the two kingdoms to defend themselves against their common enemies around, and bring these again, if possible, under tribute, as in Solomon's time. The higher destinies of the race, to uphold and spread the true religion, which alone could give either lasting prosperity or glory, had no place in Omri's thoughts. The Moabite stone seems to intimate that he forced Moab to resume payment of the tribute of goats and sheep, originally imposed by David, but latterly held back. This, however, brought an attack from Benhadad of Damascus, and peace was obtained only on hard terms, after some towns had been taken from Israel.[2] Samaria was to have a Syrian quarter, for trading purposes; a Syrian Resident was to live permanently in the city, to control Omri's foreign policy, as that of native princes of Asia is dictated by British officers; the towns across the Jordan, taken from Israel, including Ramoth Gilead,[3] were to be retained by Benhadad, and the roads were to be open for the passage of Syrian caravans through Israel, to the countries beyond.[4]

[1] The most friendly relations prevailed between Ahab and Jehoshaphat; but, as Ahab was not the man to initiate a policy, this must be traced back to Omri, between whom and Judah, moreover, no war is mentioned.

[2] Graetz, *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 433.

[3] 1 Kings xxii. 3.

[4] Ewald, vol. iii. p. 488, thinks that a right to march through the country was granted, but this seems unlikely.

But Omri's special idea was to bind his kingdom in as close an alliance as possible with Tyre, the England of that day, in its commercial activity and accumulated wealth. Virtually one in language, his people and the Phœnicians were natural allies, but for the hateful and corrupting idolatry, which made isolation the only safety for Israel. Besides, the country depended on Tyrian goods, and Tyrian traders already engrossed the activity of its bazaars. No scruples troubled the king as to a close alliance with a heathen community. Had any good come to Israel by its separation from other races? Had any harm come to Tyre from its religion? Was not its population the richest in the world? If he could bring prosperity to his subjects, it would keep them quiet, and make him the master of the different factions, besides enabling him to disband part of the army, and prevent its being, as heretofore, supreme in the State.

The internal politics of Tyre had been latterly as disturbed as those of Israel. King after king had been dethroned and murdered, till at last Ithobaal, or Ethbaal, a priest of Ashtoreth, had seized supreme power, after murdering his brother, Phalles.[1] Such commotions had necessarily weakened the State, especially by causing an extensive emigration of wealthy families, to found new colonies in Northern Africa. Benhadad I. of Damascus, moreover, now so powerful, was believed to be meditating an attack on the Phœnician communities, to absorb them into his empire. Ethbaal was doubtless, therefore, only too willing to conclude an alliance offensive and defensive with Omri, and it was determined to seal it by a marriage between Ahab, the heir to the throne of Israel, and a princess of

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 1, 2. *C. Apion*, i. 18. Mövers, *Phönizier*, vol. ii. p. 344.

Tyre. The forty-fifth Psalm has, indeed, been thought by many to celebrate a union then thought so illustrious and so full of promise, but it is regarded by some as referring to a marriage of Jeroboam II., while others think it alludes to one of the multitudinous marriages of Solomon, but this is doubtful, as allusions in the Psalm seem to indicate a later date. But this event, which must have seemed at the time a great stroke of policy on both sides, proved a supreme calamity in its results. As the marriage of Henrietta Maria determined the fall of the Stuarts, that of JEZEBEL with Ahab carried with it the ruin of Omri's dynasty. She was not the first Israelitish queen of the old Canaanite races, for David had married the daughter of the chief of Geshur,[1] and Solomon had wives of almost all the neighbouring peoples, including the Hittites and the Sidonians.[2] But these had hitherto played a subordinate part in the country, though, in the case of Solomon, they had led to the first formal sanction of idolatry in Jerusalem. Jezebel, however—fierce, imperious, vindictive, able, and unscrupulous—was to shew herself the one domineering will in Israel; Ahab, her husband, though king, taking only the second place, as the passive instrument of her stronger nature.

In his eagerness to propitiate Tyre—perhaps also in his belief that to Canaanize his people would protect him from the influence of the prophets, which had been so dangerous to his predecessors—Omri not only endangered the national religion, but lent his active support to the introduction of heathenism. Edicts, known long after as the "Statutes of Omri,"[3] expressly favoured idolatry. The prophets were treated as public enemies.[4] Even the calf worship was no

[1] 1 Chron. iii. 2.
[2] 1 Kings xi. 1.
[3] Mic. vi. 16.
[4] 1 Kings xvi. 25.

longer in court favour ; to worship Jehovah, with or without a symbol, was out of date. It had kept Israel and Tyre apart, and was now to be discontinued.

This policy, steadily carried out, had its reward. If the morals of the country were being sapped, its wealth was increasing ; if the lofty mission of Israel as the people of God was forgotten, there were no revolutions, at least for the time. From the reign of Omri there dates an increase in luxury that speaks of wide commercial activity and success.

The reign of Ahab [1] may be remembered as commencing, to use round numbers, 900 years before Christ. A lad of eighteen at his accession,[2] he shewed ere long that he was of weak will, and fond of the show and luxury of royalty, but indisposed to discharge its duties. He was not, as some have thought, a cruel tyrant, so much as feeble in character. Not unwarlike when forced to action, and sensitive for the honour of his house and people, he loved peace, with its refinements and indulgences, and, like his father, promoted it to the utmost. His misfortune was that the strength of will wanting in himself was predominant in his queen, whose tool he thus became in her worst designs and acts. The wide prosperity Omri had brought to the country continued after his death, and enabled Ahab to gratify his tastes for splendour and self-enjoyment. Samaria remained the capital, but it was too crowded with houses to please him, and he therefore raised a new palace at Jezreel, in the plain of Esdraelon, with rich gardens in which he might take his ease. It lay on a spur of the Gilboa hills, at the watershed, west to the Mediterranean, east to the Jordan, and commanded a view over the whole of the great plain of Esdraelon, on one side, while on the north and south stretched the green bays

[1] Ahab, B.C. 918–898 (received marginal chron.). [2] Renan.

from the upper of which rises the fine height of Mount Tabor, while the lower runs on to the steep descent towards Bethshean, on the Jordan. It was well watered by two springs, one twelve, the other twenty minutes distant from the present village, which, however, is a very wretched place, marked only by the remains of a tower, mounds of rubbish, and the miserable mud hovels of a degraded population, while forests of rank shrubs, weeds, and thistles cover every open space. Yet it was, doubtless, once a lovely spot, thanks, in part, to the care taken to irrigate the soil, a proof of which is still seen in the fact that there are about three hundred old cisterns, excavated in the rocky ground. Rock-cut wine-presses are also found to the east of the village, and there are many caves formerly used as granaries. I must not, indeed, speak unkindly of Jezreel, for a girl from whom I asked a drink from the earthen jar she had on her head, at once let it down, and most courteously put it at my service, with a smile which was almost more grateful than the water, for friendliness is always delightful, even in such surface gleams.

But Ahab's taste for building was not confined to this spot, for we find him establishing other new places.[1] Solomon had been contented with a throne of ivory, but the new relations with Tyre, the great centre of the African and Indian trade, enabled Ahab to build a mansion, in the ornamentation of which ivory played a principal part.[2] The nobles and richer citizens, participating in the general wealth which such a house implied, vied with each other in costly display and luxury. One Hiel of Bethel ventured, notwithstanding the curse of Joshua, to fortify Jericho, in the rich valley of the Jordan, but he did so at a heavy cost,

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 39. [2] *Ibid.*

for he lost his eldest and youngest sons while the work was in progress.[1] A hundred years later, Amos could still speak of the winter and summer houses of the great northern chiefs—of their splendid mansions and ivory palaces,[2] fitted up luxuriously with ivory couches and costly divans, on which they reclined at their banquets ; the old simplicity of sitting on carpets having passed away.[3] Lambs and fatted calves, in former days rare signs of a generous hospitality, had become the daily food. The meals of the rich were splendid feasts, to which they lay down anointed with the costliest perfumes.[4] Unmixed wine, emptied into huge bowls, in which their fathers had been contented to mingle their wine with water, was now the ordinary drink ; and musicians discoursed with harps and viols, as their masters rang out their bacchanalian songs.[5] The court movement in favour of heathenism, begun by Omri, continued with increased energy under his son. The alienation from the religious traditions of the nation was complete. All that was sacred in the popular feelings was outraged by the settled purpose of the Crown to extirpate the worship of Jehovah, even under the symbol of Jeroboam's calves, and establish Phœnician idolatry as the only tolerated religion of Israel.[6] This was Jezebel's purpose. Haughty and ambitious ; looking on the foreign people among whom she had come, with insolent contempt; a fanatic for the religion of her own country, as was natural in the daughter of a priest, she knew how to make her husband the passive agent in carrying out her plans. A vast temple to Baal was built in Samaria, large enough to contain an immense throng of

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 34. It had been rebuilt for ages, but was now fortified. Jud. i. 16 ; iii. 13. 2 Sam. x. 5.

[2] Amos iii. 15.

[3] 1 Sam. xx. 25.

[4] Eccles. ix. 8.

[5] Amos vi. 4-7.

[6] 1 Kings xvi. 31.

worshippers.[1] It stood, apparently, within a great walled enclosure, and rose in such strength as to seem like a castle.[2] A huge image of the Sun-god, flanked by idolatrous symbols, was seen within, amidst a blaze of splendour, reflected from gilded and painted roofs, and walls, and columns. A staff of 450 priests in their vestments ministered at

THE SACRED TREE OF THE ASSYRIANS.[3]

the altars, and Ahab himself attended the worship in state, presenting rich offerings; doubtless amidst all the wild excitement and license which marked the service of Baal.[4]

But the other great Phœnician deity could not be neglected. A temple to Asherah, the Canaanite Venus, was built, apparently in the precincts of Jezreel; 400 priests

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 32; 2 Kings x. 21. [2] 2 Kings x. 26.

[3] It is in its oldest and simplest form in this illustration. The symbol of the god Asshur—the winged circle—is over the royal personages who worship, barefoot. Two good genii stand behind them. Canon Rawlinson thinks the Phœnician Asherah, or "grove" of our Version, was the counterpart of the sacred tree of Assyria. *Anc. Mon.*, vol. ii. p. 238. Schrader says that "Baal" was equivalent in Assyria to two gods—Bel, the father of gods, the creator and "Bel, the son of Bel," "The light of the gods." Beltus is the female counterpart of the greater Bel, and is the same as Venus. *K. A. T.*, 176.

[4] 1 Kings xvi. 31; xviii. 19. 2 Kings iii. 2; x. 25–27.

ministering in its courts and offering on its obscene altars.[1] Of this Jezebel was the especial patroness, maintaining the whole establishment at her own cost. It is hard to realize the hurtful perversion of conscience, the weakening of moral convictions, and the clouding of true reverence, which such attacks on the sanctities of religion must have involved ; or how deeply the people must have been corrupted by royal favour shewn to a gross and sensual idolatry. Nor could it be hoped that a power which thus trampled on all that was sacred, would hesitate to outrage the lower rights of popular liberty. Everything tended to bring about a deadly struggle against a monarchy which, though established to protect the hereditary religion and privileges of the nation, had been metamorphosed into their imperious and deadly foe. The multitude, led away by royal example, might yield to the ruling fashion, but nobler hearts would turn so much the more against the House of Omri. The magnitude of the interests at stake would rouse the prophets especially to the intensest resistance. Events were hurrying to a crisis, which, as in all similar decisive moments of history, must bring forward some strong personality, to embody the inarticulate feeling of the multitude, and be its champion. The advent of Elijah was near at hand.

Meanwhile, the contrast of affairs in Judah was striking. At the close of a long and prosperous reign of forty-one years, King Asa died, after suffering for three years with a disease in the feet, apparently the gout,[2] though details are not given. Amidst a high eulogium on his character as a whole, it is gently noted as a failing in his last illness, that in his distress he put too much confidence in the priestly physicians of the day, apparently with a superstri-

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 33 ; xviii. 19.

[2] *Dict. of Bible*, art. "Asa."

tious trust in their prescriptions, as if, like oracles[1] or idol sorcerers, their power were supreme; forgetting to rely, above all, on Jehovah, even when the means were lawful. That such a blemish in the life of so good a man, and he a king, should have been handed down to the time when the Books of Chronicles were written, throws a strange light on the lofty ideal of religious life in Israel; an ideal which it would be vain to look for in any other people, ancient or modern.

Asa, like an Egyptian king, had built or caused to be hewn out for himself, a new grave, distinct from the royal tombs, with a number of compartments or cells, and in one of these he was buried with great pomp, amidst universal lamentation. His coffin or sarcophagus, moreover, as is especially mentioned, was filled up with a mixture of fragrant spices to help to preserve the body, and a vast quantity of incense was burnt in honour of him at his burial, as was customary at the funeral of kings;[2] in imitation of the practice at the death of the Pharaohs of Egypt.[3] He died in the year B.C. 914.

Jehoshaphat,[4] fortunately for Judah, was a worthy son of so good a father. At his accession, Omri, if still reigning, was near the close of his career, so that Ahab and the new southern king began their reigns almost together. As brave as his father, but more enterprising; equally faithful to

[1] So the word is used in 1 Chron. x. 3. 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. 2 Kings i. 2. In Western Asia in those ages, the feeling prevalent more or less in Assyria and Chaldæa would no doubt be widely spread. On the Euphrates medicine laid contributions on the most unclean articles of food, including snakes, the tongues of "black dogs," etc., but those who swallowed the compounds had already lost faith in the old beliefs of the people, and had substituted the recipe of the doctor for the spells of the exorcist and the ritual of the priest.

[2] 2 Chron. xvi. 12-14. Jer. xxxiv. 5. [3] Wilkinson, vol. ii. p. 385.

[4] = Jehovah judges (Cheyne); or, Jehovah judges rightly (Mühlau und Volck). Asa, by the way, means "the physician."

Jehovah, but with broader views of his duties as a theocratic ruler; the twenty-five years of his reign were a bright spot in the history of his country. He was in his early prime at his father's death—a man of 35—sensitive to the honour of his fatherland, ready to make sacrifices for its independence, and bent on raising its religious and moral tone still higher than his father had succeeded in doing.

To protect himself from without, garrisons were placed in the walled towns of Judah, and in those places in the hill country of Ephraim, the capture of which had darkened the close of Baasha's reign.[1] He also built new fortresses in Judah, and military and trade depots, which he filled with all kinds of stores.[2] The muster roll of the kingdom was carefully kept, so that all the men able to bear arms could be called out, if necessary, at once. The result of so much vigour was seen alike at home and abroad. Thoroughly loyal, the people everywhere freely contributed to support the throne with becoming state; the Philistines once more paid tribute, which had been intermitted for a time, and even the tent Arabs of the south-east did the same, in flocks of sheep and goats.[3] The southern kingdom had not been held in so great respect since the death of Solomon.

But Jehoshaphat was much more than merely a vigorous and politic ruler. He felt with even greater force than Asa that the prosperity of a people depends on their morality, and that this in turn is determined by their religion. Here and there over the land, there still remained some Asherahs with their foul impurity, and some idolatrous high places. These he at once destroyed,[4] though he did not attempt to remove those high places or local altars which were dedicated

[1] 2 Chron. xvii. 1, 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, ver. 12, 13.
[3] *Ibid.*, ver. 9–11.
[4] *Ibid.*, ver. 6.

to Jehovah.[1] It was, indeed, time that the cancer of heathenism should be eradicated from the kingdom as far as possible. On the top of the hills, as sacred to the Sun-god, "under every green tree and under every thick oak,"[2] gay-coloured tents were pitched for the obscenities of Asherah worship, for there were still temple harlots in the land.[3] Gaudy images of Baal in his different characters, resplendent in gold and silver, and mingled, perhaps, with symbols of Jehovah, stood robed in costly vestments, and were honoured with incense and offerings of bread and fine flour, and oil and honey. Still worse, sacrifices of children of both sexes were too common.[4]

But merely external reformation is necessarily superficial, nor can the forcible removal of the outward symptoms of evil secure its repudiation in the heart and life. To effect this, Jehoshaphat wisely felt that the ignorance from which in part it sprang must be enlightened, and worthier conceptions supplied to engage the interest of the multitude. He determined, therefore, to establish, throughout the land, a general system of religious instruction, based on the one true foundation of sound morals and healthy religious life—"the Book of the Law of Jehovah."[5] A royal commission of five "princes" was intrusted with this great undertaking; nine Levites and two priests being associated with them as their colleagues; assisted doubtless by a multitude

[1] *Ibid.*, xx. 33. [2] Ezek. vi. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 7. [3] 1 Kings xxii. 46.

[4] Ezek. xvi. 16-21. Smend thinks the children were killed first, quoting Gen. xxii. 10. 1 Sam. xv. 33. *Ezechiel*, pp. 94, 95.

[5] 2 Chron. xvii. 9. The mention of the "Thorah" or "Law," as already known and in public use, in the 10th century before Christ, is fatal to the theory advanced of late years that it is a creation of the days of Josiah, 300 years later. But, if thus recognized as the national Scriptures so early, what ground is left for challenging its origin, more or less completely, in the earliest ages? What period between Moses and Jehoshaphat could have palmed off its productions as veritable relics of Sinai, which the "Books of the Law" claimed to be?

of local teachers, from the priests and Levites, appointed in the different cities and towns. A lesson this to modern legislation! It was an honest and frank confession by king and people that the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and that the Word of God is the only true lamp to the feet, and light to the path, of a nation or an individual.

Nor was the establishment of a national system of godly education the only fundamental reform of this pattern ruler. Justice had become tainted at its source. It was impossible that the king should personally try all cases in a great community. Judges of civil and criminal cases were therefore appointed to sit in all the fortified towns; these being the centres of population. Nobler charge to these dignitaries could no man give, than that which they received. "Ye are to judge, not for men, to win bribes or favour the strong, but as before Jehovah, the true King of Israel, whose laws you are to administer, and whose eyes watch you as you sit on the judgment seat. No injustice, or respect of persons, or taking of bribes passes unnoticed by Him."[1] In such a kingdom as Judah, however, ecclesiastical courts, also, were essential, and these were established in Jerusalem. Skilled Levites, priests, and heads of "houses" were appointed to the high office. Questions involving the distinction between manslaughter and murder, or the meaning and application of different ecclesiastical laws,[2] were to be decided by them as a great court of appeal, the high priest acting as president.[3] A layman, "the prince of the House of Judah," was president of the court of civil and criminal law.

[1] 2 Chron. xix. 5-7. [2] Deut. xvii. 8-11. [3] 2 Chron. xix. 11.

CHAPTER III.

ELIJAH : THE GREAT PROPHET-REFORMER.

WHILE Judah was steadily retracing its steps from the errors of late years to the sound and healthy principles of purer times, Ahab and his wife Jezebel were leading Israel constantly farther from them. Baal worship was now the established religion of the State, that of Jehovah being proscribed. Bands of wretched beings "consecrated" to Baal and Asherah, as described in a former chapter,[1] wandered through the land, stirring the towns and villages to a strange excitement. The loose women connected with the idol temples plied their arts far and near. Pompous rites on a magnificent scale were celebrated in the heathen temples, for Jezebel hoped by such means to drive out the worship of Jehovah from Israel. A crusade was systematically carried out under the orders of a high priest of Baal.[2] The altars of God were everywhere overthrown,[3] and others, with the obscene symbols of the Phœnician idols, erected in their stead. The people were forced to offer at these, and, having no other holy places, largely apostatized. Only 7,000 could ere long be found who had not bowed the knee to the idol image, or kissed their hands to it in homage.[4] A fierce onslaught against the prophets had cut them down wherever found, and doubtless many others, faithful to Jehovah, had perished with them. It is the first religious persecution known in

[1] See vol. iii. p. 516.
[2] 2 Kings xi. 18.
[3] 1 Kings xix. 10, 14; xviii. 30.
[4] 1 Kings xix. 18.

history, and fittingly had Jezebel for its instigator and author. To this time, no doubt, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers when he speaks of the faithful wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented; hiding themselves in deserts, or the depth of mountains, or the darkness of caverns.[1] Some leader was needed to keep the nation from finally passing over wholly to heathenism; to strengthen the weak and timid; to rouse the supine, and to kindle enthusiasm by his noble fidelity, fervour, and self-sacrifice. Such a hero appeared in Elijah.

The steady political and religious decay of the northern kingdom had had its natural effect in a striking development of the order of prophets—the defenders of popular rights and the champions of the ancient faith. They had never failed since the time of Samuel; but, in the interval between his day and that of Elijah, no associated companies of them are mentioned. In the reign of Ahab, however, we find no fewer than 400 assembled in Samaria at one time; and Obadiah, the court chamberlain, a worshipper of Jehovah, was able to conceal a hundred, by fifties, in two caverns, during the hottest of the persecution. In ordinary times the people sought their help and trusted in their utterances with unquestioning reverence;[2] their word was a command; they were lawgivers in the State, and virtually commanders in war. Nor could any prince, however opposed to them, permanently resist their influence. He might drive them off for a time, but before long he was glad to seek their counsel once more, and to obey their directions.[3] They tempered despotism, in fact, under the Hebrew kings, as the dervishes of Asia now check that of

[1] Heb. xi. 37, 38.
[2] 1 Kings xiv. 2. 2 Kings iv. 1, ff.
[3] 1 Kings xviii. 16; xxii. 5. 2 Kings i. 2; iii. 11.

Khans and other Oriental rulers, for, in this respect, the best of the dervishes are the modern representatives of the prophets of Scripture. Nor could the fiercest measures destroy an institution so deeply rooted in the popular esteem, for we find the prophet societies flourishing after the close of Jezebel's proscription, at the ancient holy centres of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho.[1]

On the prophets rested the hope of the future. The degraded priesthood that had supplanted that of Aaron had entirely lost position and independence. Unfortunately, the times, which had tried others, put the prophets also, to a test which too many of them failed to stand. The fierceness of Jezebel terrified not a few into silence. Many fled to the security of the desert or the hills, and large numbers were won over to an outward conformity to Baal worship, or, at least, to a politic and unworthy complaisance towards power. From Ahab's reign there appear "false prophets;" men who, to get quiet, or honour, or pay, used their high gifts to flatter and serve the great, by prophesying what they fancied would please: a class not confined, I fear, to any age or to the prophets or priests of any religion.[2] Henceforward the pure and noble among the order had to contend, with ever-increasing earnestness, against this corruption and debasement of some of its members, and were too often persecuted by them.[3]

Still, amidst this reign of terror, there were some faithful Abdiels who clung to the religion of their fathers, and among these, but high above them all, towered Elijah, "the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever pro-

[1] 2 Kings ii. 2–7. 15–22; iv. 25, 38; vi. 1–7.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 8.

[3] 1 Kings xxii. 22. Jer. xxiii. 9–40. Ezek. xiii. 2. Zech. xiii. 3–6. Isa. ix. 15; xxviii. 7. Mic. ii. 11; iii. 11.

duced."[1] He had the greatness of soul to stand up singly, face to face against the whole power of the kingdom, on behalf of Jehovah. Appearing and disappearing like an apparition, his life depending on his rapid flight after delivering his message, no dangers kept him back from any point where duty demanded his presence. He shews how one man, strong in the support of God and the right, can by fearless courage and absorbing zeal change the whole course of history in his time; resist and overthow the most crushing tyranny over conscience, and bring in a new victorious epoch. He was an anticipation of Athanasius in his grand attitude of standing "alone against the world," and he was the conqueror in the struggle.

The abruptness of his introduction adds to the interest of his story. Nothing is told us of his parentage or birthplace, beyond the words, "Elijah, the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead;" but where Tishbeh was is as yet altogether uncertain.[2] His whole character, however, and his appearance and habits of life, point to his being a Gileadite, though it seems impossible to believe with Graetz that he was not an Israelite, but belonged to one of the old native races.[3] Gilead was a land of chase and pasture, of tent villages and mountain castles; with a population of wandering, half-civilized, fierce shepherds, ready at all times to repel the attacks of the desert tribes, or to go out on a foray against them.[4] Many of these Arab traits are seen in the notices of Elijah. Apparently tall,[5] he must have been sinewy and

[1] *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 328.

[2] The Septuagint has "Tishbeh of Gilead." It has been fancied from a verse in Tobit (i. 2), that Tishbeh was in Naphtali. But this is not tenable. It seems an error in translation. In the *Handbuch zu den Apokryphen*, vol. ii. p. 23, Fritzsche thinks there was a Tishbeh in Gilead and another in Naphtali.

[3] *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 28.

[4] 1 Chron. v. 10, 19–22.

[5] This is the Jewish tradition.

thin from his simple fare, his hard life, the rapidity of his movements, and his powers of physical endurance. His hair hung long and thick down his back, for he was a Nazarite. It would seem, indeed, that the prophets as a rule took this vow.[1] His dress was a simple tunic, held round him by a belt of hide, which he tightened when, like a Bedouin, he wished to run for a long distance.[2] Over this he commonly wore, like the peasants of Palestine now, and like the dervishes of Persia, a mantle or cape of sheepskin[3] with the wool on it, or of coarse camel's-hair cloth, which, as already noticed, became the special characteristic of prophets.[4] In this mantle he at times hid his face when under strong emotion,[5] and he used it, rolled up like a staff, to smite the waters of Jordan when about to pass over them.[6] On one occasion we find him bowing himself on the ground, with his face between his knees, perhaps in prayer, though the usual attitude in devotion was to stand.[7]

The immense influence of Elijah during his life is seen in the place he held in the memory of after generations in Israel. He takes rank along with Samuel and Moses; not like the former, as the apostle of a system yet undeveloped; or as the founder of a religion, like the latter; but as the restorer of the old when it was almost driven from the earth. The prophet Malachi portrays him as the announcer of the great and terrible day of Jehovah. His reappearance was constantly expected as the precursor of the

[1] Amos ii. 11, 12. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 46.

[3] The word for this garment is that used to describe the hair which covered Esau (Gen. xxv. 25), and for the Babylonish garment stolen by Achan (Josh. vii. 21), but it is not used in connection with any prophet before Elijah.

[4] Zech. xiii. 4. Isa. xx. 2. Matt. iii. 4. For curious parallels with modern dervishes see *Dict. of Bible*, ii. 432. Wolff's *Travels*, i. 329, 483, 531.

[5] 1 Kings xix. 13. [6] 2 Kings ii. 8.

[7] 1 Kings xviii. 42. Mark xi. 25. Matt. vi. 5.

Messiah. So continually was he in the thoughts of the people of New Testament times that both John the Baptist and our Lord were supposed to be no other than he.[1] The son of Sirach calls him a fire, and says that his word burned like a torch,[2] and that it was he who was to gather together again the tribes of Israel from the great dispersion.[3] The Jews believe that he has appeared often to wise and good Rabbis, generally under the form of an Arab merchant.[4] At the circumcision of Jewish children, a seat is always left vacant for him.[5] After the wine cup of each passover is drunk, the youngest child of a Jewish family opens the door, and all rise and look towards it, thinking that Elijah then enters.[6] His final coming, it is believed, will be three days before that of the Messiah, and on each of the three he will proclaim peace, happiness, and salvation, in a voice that will be heard over all the earth.[7] So firm, indeed, was the conviction of this in the days of the Talmud, that when goods were found which no owner claimed, the common saying was, Put them by till Elijah comes.[8]

Like every great enthusiastic soul, that of Elijah kindled others by his words and example. He quickened the religious life of the nation, as Samuel had done in his day. Thus, the sect of the Rechabites seems to have owed its origin to him—a body collected by Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who retired from the corruption of a settled community, to worship Jehovah in seclusion from its tempta-

[1] Matt. xi. 14. Mark ix. 11. Luke i. 17. Matt. xvii. 12, 13; xvi. 14. Mark vi. 15. John i. 21. The dervishes of the East have evidently copied their habits, in part, from traditions of Elijah. They wear their hair its full length, and wind a leather strap round their waist as a girdle. Morier, *MS. Notes.* See vol. iii. p. 80.

[2] Ecclus. xlviii. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*, ver. 10.

[4] Eisenmenger, vol. i. p. 11; vol. ii. pp. 402–7.

[5] Isaac's *Manners, etc., of the Jews*, p. 118.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 110.

[7] Eisenmenger, vol. i. p. 685.

[8] Lightfoot, *Exercit.* Matt. xvii. 10. John i. 21.

tions and trials. The hope of the future, they fancied, lay in a strict return to the simplicity and strictness of the past, and they therefore bound themselves to live in tents. They chose the lonely wilderness of the southern Jordan for their home; and adopted in their fulness the vows of Nazarites. Abstaining from wine and the grape, they confined themselves for food to the productions of the desert, and formally bound themselves to have neither tilled land, nor vineyards, nor fixed dwellings.[1]

But the most striking result of the appearance of Elijah was the impulse he gave to prophetic activity. The communities of sons, or disciples, of the prophets, of which there is no mention from the earlier years of David, appear again in the fullest vigour,[2] cherishing the ancient faith in the calm and seclusion of their settlements. Among these there were not wanting such as Micaiah,[3] to stand up boldly, like Elijah, before the world, for the truth. The honoured servant of Elijah, Elisha, the son of Shaphat,[4] especially takes a grand place as the champion of Jehovah, and, after him, generations of his order shewed, in their zeal and incorruptible loyalty to God, how deeply the example of the Tishbite had stirred them.

Yet the work of Elijah, with all its glory, was marked by the imperfection of the dispensation to which he belonged. The defender of a national theocracy, he burst on his age as a minister of judgment against unrighteousness: his sternness like that of the storm; his words lightning and tempest. All his acts shew him, like a fire, consuming the ungodly; an embodiment of the avenging justice of Jehovah in an evil day. Glowing zeal, dauntlessness of soul, and

[1] Jer. xxxv. 5-10. See Graetz, vol. ii. p. 29. Eisenlohr, vol. ii. p. 166.
[2] 2 Kings ii. 2-7, 15-22; iv. 38; vi. 1-7. [3] 1 Kings xxii. 9.
[4] Shaphat = a judge, marking the rank of the prophet's father.

unbending severity are his leading traits, though he shewed the gentlest sympathy in the relations of private life.[1] As the great and strong wind, and the earthquake and fire, rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks, before Jehovah—the awful precursors of the still small voice, for which they prepared the way—Elijah came to open the path for the kingdom of God, and bring about a state of things in which its gentle message of love could be proclaimed amongst men. He was not so much the foreshadowing image of our Divine Master as a contrast to His spirit. The Son of Man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. The wish of His disciples to call down fire from heaven, as Elijah had done, to consume those who refused to receive Him, evoked only a rebuke from Jesus Christ.[2]

The first appearance of Elijah is introduced with a startling suddenness. In the opening of a verse he is in the presence of Ahab, and at its close he vanishes, we know not whither. The persecution had cut off many of his brethren, but he, the most hated of all, had eluded his enemies, and now fearlessly approached the king, to denounce his weakness and wickedness, and make known an impending judgment on himself and the nation for their sins. Advancing with undismayed bearing to the royal chariot, he delivers his message as Ahab rides past in some lonely spot, without Queen Jezebel, whom, with a keen estimate of the character of both, Elijah carefully shuns. The guilty man is appalled by hearing that, "As surely as Jehovah, the one only God of Israel, lives"—that God before whom, in defiance of king and court, the prophet stands, as a servant before an earthly monarch, waiting His commands, looking only to Him as his Lord, and ready to defend His word against the whole power

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 8 ff. [2] Luke ix. 54, 55.

of man—the guilt of Ahab, and that of the nation in suffering him to act as he did, and in turning after him to serve strange gods, will be visited by the terrible curse of "there being no dew nor rain these years, but according to Elijah's word."[1] The kingly power had so crushed the ancient liberties of Israel, by the establishment of a military despotism, that it was virtually supreme. But it was cowed before the apparition of one who grandly proclaimed his allegiance to the invisible God, and dared to be faithful to Him in defiance of all earthly authority. The lofty spirit of Elijah, contending for the truth, carried with it a victorious and invincible power, both in itself and in its hold on the sympathies of men, like that which, in modern times, made Mary of Guise dread the prayers of Knox more than an army of 10,000 men. But, though arrested and alarmed for the moment, the strong will of Jezebel soon dissipated any passing goodness in her husband, and the persecution continued, drawing with it the curse of God on the land. A failure of rain was presently noted; one of the most terrible calamities in a country where water is in the strictest sense the condition of life. No trace of a cloud relieved the awful brightness of the heavens. The seed died in the ground; the landscape was everywhere scorched into barrenness. The hollow of the sky glowed like brass, and the earth grew like iron.[2] The brooks failed, and with them the fringe of green on their borders. The pools in their deeper parts and in the beds of torrents dried up. The water in the huge underground cisterns over the country was ere long exhausted. Winter brought no relief. No former or latter rains fell in the autumn or spring. The land lay gasping under a terrible spell, which the idol priests could do noth-

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 1. [2] Deut. xxviii. 23.

ing to remove. The drought extended even to Phœnicia,[1] as we learn not only from the Scriptures, but from a heathen writer quoted by Josephus. "There was a want of rain," says he, "for a year, under Ethbaal" (the father of Jezebel); "but," he adds, "when he made great prayers, heavy thunderstorms came."[2] This was no doubt the drought foretold by Elijah, though it lasted three years in Israel, and its cessation was due to the death of Baal's priests, not to their supplications.

What such a visitation implied is seen more or less vividly by the occasional droughts in Palestine in our own day. Thus, in 1888, the surface of the Sea of Galilee was five feet lower in April than it had been in February, and the Jordan, where it leaves the lake, was only knee deep, where, in March, there was a maximum depth of nearly six feet six inches. The springs also throughout Galilee, but specially in the district of Tiberias, became unusually poor, and many dried up totally; the large towns of Lûbieh and of Nimrîn being obliged to get their water supply since the preceding September from the powerful but distant spring of Hattîn, at a distance of four and two miles respectively. At Nazareth the want of drinking water became most urgent, as even the good spring at Kerm-el-Emîr could no more answer the wants of thousands, and, of course, there was not a drop left, to irrigate the gardens below. Foreigners who were not happy enough to have friends, found nobody, even for money, to water their animals.[3]

Meanwhile Elijah fled to the Cherith, apparently on the east of the Jordan, where so many torrents cleave the high table-lands of Gilead, and the abundant woods secure a

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 14. [2] Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xiii. 4.
[3] *Palest. Fund*, April, 1888.

long supply of water. The position of this retreat is not known ; but in the thickets that hung over the yet unexhausted stream, the prophet hid himself for the time. There, we are told, he drank of the brook, and was supported by bread and flesh brought him each morning and evening by ravens, whose voracious habits his Divine Master had controlled so that they became the ministers to His servant in his necessity.[1] After a time, however, the pools in the bed of the Cherith dried up ; the thickets on its banks withered, and the very birds had to forsake the spot. Another refuge was imperative, and this time it was found, by Divine direction, at Zarephath, the modern village of Sarafend, on the shore of the Mediterranean, about ten miles south of Sidon. No one in Israel was to have the honour of entertaining the prophet.[2] The heights of Lebanon, with their many rivers and streams, must have supplied Phœnicia with water long after it had become scarce in Israel, and the very daring which sought shelter in the territory of Ethbaal would, of itself, make that retreat the more secure.

In this remote village, overlooking the plain and the sea, lived a widow of the same race and religion as Jezebel herself,[3] but very different in spirit. As Elijah, tired and faint with long travel, approached the gate of the town, she had come to the open space outside, to gather a few sticks in

[1] It is a lesson to the Inquisitors who regard any trace of mental freedom in a religious book as justifying their pious denunciation of the author, that Dr. Kitto, whom no one with either head or heart would accuse of heresy, timidly suggests, as if in terror of some literary Torquemada, that, instead of *Orebim*, "ravens," we should read *Arbim*, "Arabs," by changing the vowels. (*Bib. Illust.*, vol. iv. p. 219.) But this change is inadmissible, from the unanimity of the Hebrew MSS. It is to be noticed that there is no other trace of the miraculous in the passage.

[2] How greatly that honour was prized is well shewn in Strauss, *Pilgrimage of Helon*, vol. i. p. 17.

[3] She says, "thy God." 1 Kings xvii. 12.

preparation for what she thought would be her last meal; for the drought had raised prices beyond the reach of a poor widow. While thus busy, the voice of the stranger arrested her. "Would she bring him a drink of water?" Elijah had asked this to test whether he had found her to whom he had been sent, and her instant compliance shewed him that he had. A further request, therefore, followed, on her going off for the water, that she would bring him "a morsel of bread in her hand." But her means were at the lowest, for she had only a handful of meal left in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse. The gaunt, travel-worn stranger, however, knew how to win her kind offices. His appearance, very probably, convinced her that he was a "holy man;" a title often given to devotees of Eastern religions. Trusting his assurance that Jehovah, the God of Israel, whom, now as ever, he openly owned, even in such times and in Phœnicia, would keep her meal and oil from failing till He sent rain on the earth,[1] she hastened to obey him.

After such an introduction, he found a hearty welcome in the widow's house. She had seen better days, for her house had an "aliyeh" or roof-chamber built over it—the room specially appropriated for guests, as the best furnished in the house, and usually dedicated, in a well-ordered family, to meditation and prayer.[2] In this or some other retreat the prophet must have spent more than two years, during which the miracle of the restoration of the widow's son to life took place, Jewish tradition adding that he afterwards waited on Elijah in his journeys, and finally became the first prophet to the heathen world—Jonah, the son of Amittai—the messenger of God to guilty Nineveh.[3]

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 8-16.
[2] *Helon's Pilgrimage*, vol. i. p. 20. See p. 125.
[3] Eisenmenger, *Entd. Jud.*, vol. ii. p. 725.

Meanwhile the awful drought continued, bringing in its train all the horrors of famine on the northern kingdom. Samaria itself suffered terribly.[1] Pasture at last utterly failed even for the royal horses and mules.[2] Field crops had long since disappeared, but it might still be hoped that some grass could be found round the springs which abound in Central Palestine, or in the holes and shady spots of torrent beds, where a little moisture would perhaps yet remain. In his extremity, Ahab himself determined to search the country for relief, along with the chamberlain of the palace, his most confidential officer ; each taking a separate route. Suddenly, as Obadiah was on his journey, Elijah stood before him. He had been long sought for by Jezebel, acting in Ahab's name, through all the neighbouring kingdoms ; an oath being demanded from each that he could not be found in it : and, now, he is in Ahab's very neighbourhood. At such an apparition, the minister, overwhelmed with awe, fell on his face, as before one rightly claiming the lowliest reverence.[3] Two words only, but two of awful significance to the faithful Obadiah, followed, as a summons to take to the king—"Behold—Elijah!" Ahab would expect that his servant would then and there have killed the prophet, rather than bear his message. Moreover, it was a daring thing to ask an Eastern king to come to a subject, instead of that subject humbly approaching the monarch. Was not his tried fidelity to Jehovah in the past, added Obadiah, a ground for some favour now? He had kept a hundred prophets alive through the persecution and famine, feeding them on all the times afforded, bread and

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 2.

[2] *Ibid.*, ver. 5. The words, "that we lose not all," are translated by Thenius, "so that we shall have to kill some of them."

[3] 1 Kings xviii. 7, 9.

water, and hiding them in secure hill caves. Elijah might be carried off by the Spirit of God as suddenly as he had come, and, in that case, to tell Ahab that he had been seen and not slain would be the messenger's death. Being assured, however, that the prophet would face the king, Obadiah went to him, and he at once obeyed the summons. His rough salute, "Art thou there, O troubler of Israel?" soon calmed into awe as Elijah retorted the charge on him and his House. *He* had troubled Israel by forsaking Jehovah and following the Baals. Quailing before the dreaded "man of God," Ahab listened with alarmed submission. King elsewhere, he had now found a master in whose hands he was only a passive instrument. He was commanded, rather than asked, to summon the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a great meeting at Mount Carmel, Elijah's special haunt, and already a holy place, famous for an altar of Jehovah, now overthrown, like all others, throughout the land. No spot could have been more fitting for the purpose intended. The range of Carmel, some parts of which rise 1,600 and 1,700 feet above the sea, skirts nearly the whole south of Esdraelon. Though then bare and scorched, like the whole country, its luxuriant richness in ordinary times was a proverb. Its "excellency"[1] was the ideal of supreme fertility to the Hebrew mind. Rocky dells with deep jungles of copse, shrubberies thicker than any others in Central Palestine, open glades, and slopes bright with hollyhocks, jasmine, flowery creepers, and a world of blossoms, shrubs, and fragrant herbs, still delight the eye. In comparison even with the hills of Samaria, the sides of which were most fruitful, Carmel, crowned as well as clothed with verdure, was the paradise of the land. An altar on it was a

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 9. Mic. vii. 14.

great place of religious resort on new moons and Sabbaths.[1] Its reputation as a sanctuary, centuries later, led Pythagoras thither, while Tacitus tells us that Vespasian found on it, even in his time, an altar without image or temple.[2] It was, moreover, at a prudent distance from Samaria and Jezreel for Elijah's present purpose.

This lovely chain of green and wooded heights dips at its west end, into the Mediterranean, by a steep bluff, known as Cape Carmel, while towards its east end there rises a prominent summit known immemorially as the scene of Elijah's sacrifice. The tradition is justified by the fact that it is the only spot in all the range where the Kishon is close enough to answer the requirements of the Scripture narrative. A steep path, from the plain below, leads to a hollow, sloping plateau, still called "Mahrakah," or "the place of burning." A peak rises, apart, to the south-east, facing the plain in a cliff about forty feet high, the descent afterwards being gradual. The nearly level plateau is dotted with olive trees, and there is a great cistern, now dry, dug out in the limestone rock. Below this, a short way off, is a well, or rather ancient reservoir, also cut out of the rock, overhung by some fine trees; a few broken stone steps now leading down to the water, which percolates through the limestone beds overhead, and is always more or less abundant, even in the dryest seasons. The water required for Elijah's commands, could thus be found even when the brooks and springs everywhere else had disappeared; a striking fact incidentally proved by the presence, in the reservoir, of a kind of fresh-water snail,[3] which can live only where the water supply is unfailing. Fourteen hundred feet below flows the

[1] 2 Kings iv. 23.

[2] *Dict. of Geog.*, art. "Carmelus."

[3] The *Meritina Michoui*.

Kishon, when it does flow, which may be said to be only after such storms as that which closed the eventful day of Elijah's assembly. Between the hill and the plain is a knoll to which the name is given of Tell-el-Kussis, "the priests' hill." At a point ten minutes' walk from the open plateau, the Mediterranean may be seen, so that it was not necessary for the prophet's attendant to climb to the top of the hill to have it in view.

Here, on the last prominent height at the east end of Carmel, where the last glimpse of the sea and the first of Esdraelon are offered, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal assembled on the appointed day: those of the Asherah appearing to have been kept from coming, by Jezebel, their special patroness.

Here lay scattered the stones of the altar of Jehovah, which had been recently thrown down; and hither, apparently from a tradition of the fact, the Druses still come yearly from Lebanon in great numbers to offer sacrifice. Close beneath the rocks, under the shade of ancient olive trees, was the unfailing well, which, even after the long drought, held sufficient water to supply Elijah with as much as he required. On the slopes were gathered, in widely extended ranks, ranged on one side, the king and people, with the prophets of Baal, in their black robes and peaked turbans. On the other, supported only by his single attendant, stood the solitary prophet of Jehovah, his rough sheepskin mantle over his shoulders, his simple linen tunic held together by a strap of hide, and his long hair hanging down his back, or blown by the mountain breeze. But, though alone, his bearing was that of a king of men, whose orders all present at once almost involuntarily obeyed. About 25 miles off, on the south-east, rose the city of Jezreel, on its

green hill, with Ahab's palace and stately gardens, in which perhaps was Jezebel's temple of Asherah. Close under the hill, as I have said, was the deep bed of the Kishon, at the moment a mere stony gulf, from which the water had long since disappeared.

It was early morning, when Baal was worshipped as the rising sun. Calling to the people, Elijah upbraided them with their fickleness. "How long," asked he, "will you limp now on one foot and then on the other?" or, as

EL MAHARRAKAH, THE SUPPOSED SCENE OF ELIJAH'S SACRIFICE.
W. C. P. Medlycott, *pinx.*

Graetz understands it, will ye hop back and forward like birds, from one perch to another? "If Jehovah be God, follow Him: if Baal, follow him." But the multitude were silent. Every incident that follows is striking. The steps by which the prophet proposes to decide the claims of Jehovah and His idol rival—that an altar should be built for each, to be kindled by fire from heaven, which Baal, the Sun-god, could surely, above all others, send most easily; the irony with which he jeers the priests of Baal as they

circled, hour after hour, round their altar and sacrifice, in wild Oriental fanaticism, with shrill cries, and frenzied excitement; their hair streaming in the wind, their faces painted; loud savage music adding to the din. It must have been such a scene as I witnessed at Gaza, where a circle of men went through a long "zikr" in honour of a "saint," with continuous cries and wild bendings of the body; or like the rites of the dervishes who perform their dances in a circle, whirling round, leaping, stooping to the ground, bounding back, and leaping again, all the while keeping up a ceaseless din with the words, "No God but God, and Mohammed the prophet of God," every limb becoming at last rigid, their tongue protruding, their eyes as if starting from their sockets, till at last their excitement grows so great that they often cut themselves with knives and swords, till they faint with loss of blood, and pierce themselves with wooden or iron spikes, which they leave sticking in them, or lie on the sharp edge of a scimeter, or eat scorpions or prickly pear—most of which horrors I have myself seen done, the monotonous cries continuing all the time. "Cry louder," said Elijah, as no answer came, from morning to noon, to their incessant cries of "Ha Baal anænu! Ha Baal anænu!" "Hear us, O Baal!" "He is a god, and must listen to such fervent prayers. But perhaps he has his head full and cannot listen, or is out of the way, or perhaps he is sleeping, and, if so, his servants won't let him be disturbed."[1] Driven to frenzy by such gibes, they broke into still wilder excitement; strove to move the god by cutting themselves with the swords and knives they always carried for the purpose, till the blood streamed over their vestments and limbs; nor did they desist till the time of the evening

[1] Thenius, 1 *B. d. Könige*, c. xviii. v. 27.

sacrifice, as the sun was sinking towards the sea in the west. Then, at last, Elijah, as calm as they had been frenzied, orders them to stand aside;[1] with his own hands repairs with twelve stones the ruined altar of Jehovah, in memory of the twelve tribes of undivided Israel; makes the people dig a trench round it as broad as a two-peck measure,[2] and drench the altar and the sacrifice on it three times with water from the well at hand, till the very trench was full. And now, advancing with calm dignity, he utters loudly in the evening air a brief but earnest prayer: "Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that *Thou* art God in Israel, and I Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that this people may know that Thou, Jehovah, art God, and that what happens has been appointed by Thee, to turn their hearts back again to Thyself."[3] "Then," we are told, "the fire of Jehovah fell," consuming not only the sacrifice, but the wood below it, the stones, and the very dust of the altar, and licking up the water in the trench. Such a miracle, at such a time, with such antecedent excitement, awed the vast multitude. Casting themselves on their faces, a universal shout arose, "Jehovah, He is God! Jehovah, He is God!" Elijah was supreme. His least word, as that of one visibly speaking for the Almighty, was law. His triumph had rekindled in all, the old zeal for the God of their fathers. It was now possible to carry out sternly the fierce proscription of idolaters in Israel. The persecutors had become the victims. Ordering the crowd to seize Baal's priests, and lead them down the hill to the edge of the deep channel of Kishon,

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 30. Septuagint. [2] Two seahs. Conder, p. 80.
[3] Thenius. 1 Kings xviii. 37.

Elijah himself and the multitude with him slew them to a man, throwing their corpses, we may suppose, into the bed of the torrent, unburied, to be washed out to sea by the coming storm.

Meanwhile, Ahab, confounded and paralyzed, was a passive spectator. He had allowed the massacre of the priests apparently without an effort to save them. A sacrifice was followed, as usual, by a feast to ratify the covenant just made, and this was now spread on the top of the hill, beside the altar of God ; the king joining in it, and thus, as representative of the nation, binding himself to follow Jehovah by this solemn act of communion with Him at what was regarded as His Table. Already the partial purification of the land from idolatry had been accepted as a sign of national penitence, and the curse of drought recalled. The sound of a distant storm bringing abundant rain, though as yet unnoticed by others, was heard by the prophet. Retiring to the upper slope of the hill, and casting himself down on the earth, his face between his knees, doubtless in prayer, his attendant, at his command, went out seven times to the part of the hill from which the far-off sea was visible. The sky was still cloudless, the ocean calm ; but at last he could report that in the clear air of an Eastern sunset he saw a small cloud rising out of the waters — the well-known sign in the Levant of a coming storm. Not a moment was to be lost, for the heavens darkened apace, and the sea rose in foam before the driving hurricane. Hastily mounting his chariot, therefore, at the foot of the hill, the king drove off in pale haste, while the great plain was yet practicable ; to get to Jezreel before the wild night flooded the hollows which seam it in every direction. Through the fierce storm, however, with its darkness and sheets of rain, the way gleaming only

by moments before him, at each lightning flash, Elijah, Arab like, tightening his belt, ran ahead of the chariot the whole way to Jezreel, as if to guarantee the king's safety, and to shew him honour, now he had done his duty. But at the entrance to the town he vanished into the darkness, and was gone. He would not come near Jezebel.

The weak king had bent before a stronger will, and had calmly looked on while his priests were being slain, but the

VIEW FROM CARMEL.

W. C. P. Medlycott, *pinx.*

sterner nature of his wife was not so easily daunted. "The gods do so to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time," was her instant message to Elijah, on hearing what had happened. The prophet, in the inevitable excitement of the day, had apparently hoped that the triumph of Jehovah

would extend from Carmel over the land. But Jezebel's relentless spirit shewed him that, while she lived, idolatry would be safe. The revulsion of feeling was instant. A few hours ago, at the head of a vast multitude; the king recognizing him as the prophet of God, and yielding up to him, as such, all authority for the time; his life was now in imminent danger. No refuge in Palestine was safe from the infuriated Jezebel; he must flee beyond its limits. Hurrying south, therefore, with his attendant, the Phœnician widow's son, if Jewish tradition be right, and passing through Judah, he never rested till he found himself at Beersheba, eighty miles from Jezreel, as the crow flies. There he left his man behind, and set out, alone, into the desert, still farther south. The overpowering excitement of the last few days, and the fatigue of the rapid flight, had been too much even for his iron frame and strength of mind. Profound despondency had settled on his spirit, and he wandered over the dreary, sun-scorched region, wishing only to die; for his hope of re-establishing the worship of Jehovah had seemingly failed. Like many a gallant spirit in the hour of dejection, he saw everything in the gloomiest light. The children of Israel had forsaken God's covenant, thrown down His altars, and slain His prophets with the sword. He alone was left, and even he had to flee for his life. But the God he so faithfully served was nigh at hand. He had lain down and fallen asleep under a solitary flowering broom—the special shrub of the desert, where it grows, in isolated rareness, the one sign of vegetable life in the waste, and affords a scanty but grateful shade.[1] Here, "as he lay and slept," a heavenly vision was twice vouchsafed

[1] It is the "Retem" of the Arabs—the *Retama retam* of botanists. 1 Kings xix. 5, the Hebrew reads "*one* rotem tree."

him, and, waking, he found a cake of meal, baked on hot stones,[1] and a cruse of water; still the only requirements of a Bedouin. He now determined to go on to the holy mountain of Horeb, and forthwith set out. The distance in a direct line is about 170 miles from Beersheba, but wide detours may have been necessary. Forty days—nearly six weeks—were spent on the journey, during which, we read, he had no food, his strength being doubtless miraculously sustained, though our own day has witnessed repeated instances of a similarly protracted fast, during which nothing but water passed the lips.

In the secluded plain below the highest point of Jebel Mûsa, a cave is shewn as that in which Elijah sought shelter for the night at Horeb. Wherever it was, the spot was known when the Book of Kings was written as "the cave:" but whether from the fame of the prophet's visit, or as well known before, it is impossible to say. That night another vision was granted him, and the question, divinely prompted, rose in his soul: "What doest thou here, Elijah; away from thy field of work, in this lonely sanctuary of the hills?" He pleaded in justification that he was, as he believed, the sole survivor in Israel of the servants of God, and that even his life was in peril. The Voice, however, directed him to leave the cavern on the morrow, and stand upon the mount, before the Lord, who would pass by.[2] Having done so, God revealed Himself, in all the terror of His most appalling manifestations.[3] A rushing hurricane, before which Elijah shrank once more into the depths of the cave, burst through the awful gorges of the mountains, tearing off huge granite fragments on every side. Then followed

[1] 1 Kings xix. 6. Septuagint.
[2] 1 Kings xix. 11. Septuagint, and literal rendering of Hebrew.
[3] Exod. xxxiv. 6.

the crash of an earthquake, making the mighty peaks and summits rock and sway on their foundations, and after that the peals of an awful thunderstorm reverberated through the naked defiles; the incessant blaze of Eastern lightning flaming around, and revealing the heights and depths of the rocky wilderness. But Jehovah was in none of these. At last, in the silence almost peculiar to that region, broken by no falling stream, or note of bird, or sound of beast, or voice of man, came "a still small voice." What it was is not told us, but Elijah at once felt that the decisive moment had arrived. Wrapping his face in his sheepskin mantle, and once more going out to the mouth of the cave, he stood, awe-struck, to hear. Once more the question is asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" and once more the same answer is returned. Meanwhile he had learned a great lesson. Till now he had thought only of the more terrible attributes of Omnipotence in connection with God—the tempest, the earthquake, the lightnings of His wrath. But he had been taught that he was henceforth to recognize the gentler aspects of the Almighty—the still small voice—as His chosen symbol. He himself had hidden from the former, but had instinctively veiled his face before the latter. God was gentle and tender as well as just and stern. Work, not timid flight, was Elijah's vocation, as it is that of all true men. Three commands were given him. Hazael was to be anointed king of Syria, instead of Benhadad; Jehu, the son of Nimshi, king of Israel instead of Ahab; and Elisha, the son of Shaphat, was to be set apart as his own successor.[1] He was cheered, moreover, with the intimation, that though he thought himself the only servant of Jehovah left in Israel, there were still, unknown to him,

[1] 1 Kings xix. 15–17.

but known to God, 7,000 who had not bowed the knee or kissed the hand to Baal. Through them, and the successor to his office, who would be raised up, the interests of the truth would be defended and promoted, from generation to generation, till He came, in whom the still small voice which would not strive or cry, or be heard in the streets, who would lead the kingdom of God to final and eternal triumph.[1]

The anointing of Hazael and Jehu was reserved for Elisha, the successor of Elijah, but the selection of Elisha himself was made by the great prophet. Leaving Horeb, in obedience to the Divine command, he passed up the Jordan valley, in all probability to escape notice by thus choosing the sunken route of the Ghor. His loneliness may have awakened a desire for companionship, now that he was growing old, and a friend was graciously provided. At Abel-Meholah—"the meadow of the dance"—a broader part of the Ghor, as Jerome informs us, ten miles south of Bethshean, there lived the local judge, or Shaphat, a man, as his office implied, of solid position in the community. Like his neighbours, he farmed his land, and his son, Elisha, at the moment of Elijah's passing was actually ploughing. "Twelve yoke," it is said, "were before him" —an expression which may either mean that twelve "yoke" of land, the yoke being as much as two oxen could plough in a day, were already ploughed, and he was busy with the last,[2] or that eleven ploughs were at work under his father's slaves, while he himself guided a twelfth. Elijah was apparently on the other side of the river, but passed over[3]

[1] Matt. xii. 19–20.

[2] Ewald thinks this, but Thenius and Keil fancy there were eleven ploughs besides that of Elisha. If so, the farm must have been a large one. See also *Land and Book*, p. 144.

[3] Hebrew.

to him; or it may be he went only from the path into the field. Going up to Elisha, he threw over him his sheepskin mantle[1]—the recognized summons to the prophetic office, as a son or disciple. As in the case in the Gospel,[2] there was a moment's hesitation, but Elijah must have felt the sincerity of the request that followed, for he did not refuse to grant it. With him, as with our Lord, no man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, was fit for the kingdom of God; yet there was no real looking back in Elisha's case, but simply the honest utterance of a dutiful heart. "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and mother, and I will follow thee."[3] "Go," said Elijah, "go back and do it: what I have done in no way conflicts with your performance of filial duty;[4] but remember that thou art consecrated to God."[5] Returning home, therefore, for the moment, he hastily bade his father's household farewell. Then, after offering the pair of oxen with which he had been ploughing, as a sacrifice of thanks and devotion to Him whose public servant he had now become, and making a parting feast of the flesh to his father's people, he left the well-to-do homestead behind, and followed Elijah; to be henceforth his "minister,"[6] or servant, and companion.

[1] The Persian Sufis—Mohammedan priests—when in expectation of death, select a favourite pupil, and appoint him their successor by bequeathing him their cloak or other upper garment. Brahmins are invested with the priestly character by having a yellow mantle thrown across their shoulders, and bound round the waist by a sacred cord.

[2] Luke ix. 61. [3] Hebrew. [4] Keil. [5] Thenius.

[6] The same word as is used of Joshua in his relations to Moses, Exod. xxiv. 13. Of Abishag to David, 1 Kings i. 15. It is sometimes translated "servant," Exod. xxxiii. 11.

CHAPTER IV.

ISRAEL UNDER AHAB AND AHAZIAH.

Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.	These dates seem all to be wrong the inscriptions of Shalmaneser II. shewing that Ahab was reigning nearly fifty years later.
Ahab, B.C. 918-898	877-856	913-890	
Ahaziah, 898-896	856-855	890-889	

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Judah.—Jehoshaphat.	914–889	878–853	909–883

Assyria.—Tigulti ninip, 892–885.
Assur-nazir-apli, 885–860.
He lays Phœnicia under tribute, 876.
Shalmaneser II., 860–822.

Syria.—Benhadad II. (date unknown).
The full name of Benhadad was Benhadad-idri, "the son of Rimmon, my glory." There are forty-one names for the god Rimmon in Assyrian and Babylonian.
—*Trans. of Soc. of Bib. Arch.*, 1883, 72.

The history of Elijah now, for a time, breaks off. Hiding somewhere, in security, from Ahab and Jezebel, he ceased to take a prominent part in the progress of events. After what he had seen on Carmel, Ahab may, also, perhaps, have intermitted his persecution of the servants of Jehovah, for we find the schools of the prophets flourishing in these years, without disturbance from without, at Bethel, Jericho, and Gilgal. It may be, the secret of this toleration lay in part, however, in the deterioration of the order itself, for we shall ere long find that only one of this great brotherhood—

Micaiah, the son of Imlah[1]—remained firmly opposed to the House of Omri. But Ahab had had trouble enough with prophets to deal more gently even with one who always predicted evil in his case, and contented himself with keeping Micaiah in prison.[2]

Meanwhile political affairs had become overclouded. The king of Syria,[3] Benhadad II., whose capital was Damascus, which Rezin had torn from the empire of David in the time of Solomon,[4] had rapidly become the most powerful monarch west of the Euphrates, and was head of a great confederacy of no fewer than thirty-two tributary kings, bound to serve him in war;[5] Hamath, the Hittite city on the Orontes, being the second State in the league. Followed by his vassals, he overran the territories of Ahab, apparently availing himself of the weakness that must have followed the drought and famine, and the confusion that reigned through the religious persecution. Large districts were speedily subdued, and Samaria itself so severely straitened that Ahab was forced to sue for peace. Benhadad, however, was over-confident in his arms, and proposed terms to which the inhabitants would not submit. Not only was all the silver and gold in the city demanded; the royal harem and the king's children must be surrendered. The poorer houses would be spared, but the palace and the residences of the courtiers were to be at Benhadad's mercy. Ahab, thoroughly overawed by the success and truculent harshness of his enemy, was ready to listen even to such humiliating terms, but the elders of the city and the mass of

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 8.

[2] *Ibid.*, ver. 8, 18, 26.

[3] "Syria" was originally a contraction of "Assyria," and in its widest sense was equivalent to "Aram," the whole vast region bounded by the great mountain chain of Taurus, and extending from Asia Minor, in the north, to the Euphrates on the east, and Arabia on the south.

[4] 1 Kings xi. 23-25.

[5] 1 Kings xx. 1, 16.

the people would not permit him. The Syrian was therefore told that the gold and silver, and even the wives and children, would be given up, but the houses of the nobles could not be plundered. A boastful reply to this, threatened the utter destruction of Samaria. The force attacking it would be so great that when its walls and houses were burnt to ashes, there would not be a handful for each of the soldiers assailing them. "Let not him who girds on his armour," replied Ahab spiritedly, "boast himself as he that putteth it off." Meanwhile, a prophet, with a courage worthy of his order, true to the national spirit, and faithful to God, encouraged the king, by assuring him that Benhadad would be defeated. By his directions the servants of the country chieftains who had fled into Samaria, and the men-at-arms then in the city—in all only about 7,000 combatants—were mustered, and sent out in a vigorous sally at noon, when they would be least expected. Troops had already been drawn out to storm the town, but Benhadad and his great men were enjoying themselves during the heat of the day by a carousal in the tents, or booths of branches and boughs, which had been extemporized for them, as is still the custom in Eastern campaigns. Word hurriedly sent, announcing the sally, could not rouse him from his debauch. Those who dared to attack him were to be taken alive and brought to his presence. An army thus led was, however, an easy prey to a fierce assault. Disconcerted by the vigour of the Israelites, the force detailed to storm the city turned and fled; and the panic spread so quickly through the whole army, that Benhadad barely escaped, on horseback, with some of his cavalry,[1] leaving his chariots and camp in the hands of Ahab.

[1] 1-Kings xx. 1-21.

Such a power as that of Damascus was not likely, however, to submit to a humiliating defeat. It was due, said the courtiers, to the God of Israel being a mountain God; had the battle been fought on the lowlands, the result would have been different. A new army exactly like that which had been dispersed was, therefore, raised, and marched into the great plain of Esdraelon in the opening of the fighting season, next year. In its rear lay the walled town of Aphek, in the Mishor or pastoral uplands, east of the Jordan, apparently the modern village "Fik," east of the Sea of Galilee, on the highway to Damascus; the wide array filling all the eastern end of the plain. But Ahab had been forewarned by a prophet that this new invasion would take place, and was prepared for it. Dividing his force in two, he kept them for seven days on the heights near at hand, waiting a favourable moment for attack. Compared with their assailants, they seemed, on the mountain sides, like two flocks of goats, while the invaders appeared to cover the country. But they were strong in the remembrance of their last year's victory, and, watching the right moment, swooped down on the Syrians with such vehemence as drove all before them. The slaughter was once more terrible, and Benhadad had again to flee. This time, however, he could get no farther than Aphek, which Ahab at once attacked. A vast number perished in the defence of the wall, which was at last carried and levelled with the ground;[1] if, indeed, it did not fall through an earthquake or by undermining. Benhadad himself fled from house to house as the victors pressed

[1] The wall may have fallen by an earthquake, as some suppose, God sending it miraculously; though with such a man as Ahab in command of Israel, this could only be for the vindication of the Divine power. Ewald thinks the 27,000 perished in the ruins of the city; Thenius, that the wall was undermined—a part of the enemy enticed to it, and that the walls then sank under their weight.

into the town, but at last had to plead, in his turn, for peace. Putting on sackcloth, and throwing rope halters round their necks,[1] his courtiers came humbly to the conqueror, craving for Benhadad that his life might be spared. It was one of the decisive moments on which the whole future of a country depends. An opportunity had been given to crush to the dust the threatening power of Syria. Honour, interest, policy, and respect for the national party and the prophets, alike urged Ahab to press his advantage to the uttermost. But his habitual weakness, incapacity, love of ease, aversion to the honourable cares and duties of his position, fear of pushing matters to extremity with so powerful a kingdom, and perhaps, also, the hope of securing a strong alliance against the Assyrians, who threatened the future of all Western Asia, turned the scales disastrously for Israel. Flattered by an appeal for his life from so powerful an enemy, he at once shewed his weakness, asking if Benhadad were still alive, and calling him his brother. Emboldened by so favourable an omen, the envoy hastened to follow it up by an appeal to his brotherly sympathy. An invitation to bring the king followed, and, on his appearance, a place was given him in the royal chariot, beside Ahab. He was of course profuse in his offers of goodwill. He would give back the towns of Israel taken in the past by Syria, and would let Israel have bazaars in Damascus as the Syrians had had in Samaria.[2] A treaty of peace on this easy footing was forthwith made, and Benhadad allowed to return to

[1] In similar cases among the Turks, swords are hung from the halters. *A. u. N. Morgenland*, vol. iii. p. 200.

[2] The expression is, to have "streets" in Damascus. This may be illustrated, perhaps, by the condition imposed on Constantinople by the Sultan Bajazet, that the Turks should have a street in that city in which they might live under their own judge, and retain their own religion and laws. Many Turks, as the result of this, forthwith came to live in Constantinople.

Damascus, with his power and empire unimpaired—to laugh at the simplicity of his conqueror and to plan revenge.[1]

Such folly on Ahab's part met with a speedy rebuke.[2] A prophet, wounded and bleeding, his face and head covered with his mantle, and strewed with ashes in token of profound grief, suddenly stood before him. Beginning a ready tale, he stated that while he had been in the battle a captain had brought a prisoner to him, with the strictest orders, on pain of death or a heavy fine, not to let him escape. While the speaker, however, had been looking this way and that, the prisoner had fled. What was to be done? "You have yourself," replied Ahab, "pronounced the just judgment in your case." On this, throwing off the covering from his face, the prophet suddenly revealed himself, and with that startling boldness peculiar to the "holy men" of Oriental countries, told the king, in ominous words, that, as he had suffered a man to escape whom Jehovah had devoted to utter destruction, his own life would be taken instead; his people also perishing for the Syrians whom he had let go free. The star of the house of Omri was sinking. Ahab returned to Samaria, indignant at the prophet and displeased with himself. But he soon forgot all in the presence of Jezebel.

A great change had meanwhile come in the affairs of Western Asia, involving the whole future of its various nations and states. Ever since the days of Solomon, the kingdom founded by the dynasty of Rezin at Damascus, had been the terrible and inveterate foe of Israel. In each reign Syrian wars had threatened or burst on the land, spreading distress and dismay. Now, however, a power which had once been supreme from the Tigris to the Mediterranean,

[1] 1 Kings xx. 24-34. [2] 1 Kings xx. 35-43.

but had for a hundred and fifty years been crippled and harmless, again alarmed these wide regions by a display of fresh vigour and aggressive designs. Under Tiglath-pileser I., about B.C. 1100, the rule of Assyria had stretched from Kurdistan to the Grecian Archipelago, including the whole of Lebanon and Phœnicia. But a strong league of the Hittite kings of Syria had effectually humbled it, and torn away from the successors of the great king all his dominions west of the Euphrates. To this had been due the possibility of the empire of David and Solomon, and that of the Syrians at Damascus. Babylon, moreover, profited by the opportunity to strike for its ancient independence, throwing off the Assyrian yoke, and even taking possession of the districts south of Nineveh, nor could Egypt, which was distracted by a struggle between the priestly kings of Thebes and the kings of the twenty-first Dynasty, at Tanis, in the Delta, disturb Palestine or Western Asia by any attempt to avail itself of the eclipse of Assyrian power, to regain the old conquests of Thothmes III. or Rameses II., which had extended to the Euphrates, though the whole Nile valley had been ultimately united under a new dynasty, the twenty-second, to which Shishak, who plundered the temple and city of Jerusalem under Rehoboam, belonged. But his vigorous rule had not long ceased when Egypt once more sank into anarchy, so that it was easily conquered by the Ethiopian Sabako, the So of the Old Testament.

After a hundred and fifty years of obscurity, however, Assyria once more, in the middle of the ninth century B.C., under its warlike king, Assur-nazir-apli, entered on a career of conquest, and cleared its home territories of their Babylonish garrisons. He was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser II., in B.C. 860, whose long reign of thirty-eight years was a

continuous series of campaigns against every nation he could reach with his armies. After conquering Babylonia, he marched in triumph to the shores of the Persian Gulf, and exacted tribute from the petty kings of Chaldæa.[1] But these triumphs only kindled his military ardour. He now determined to extend his empire to the ancient grandeur it had obtained under Tiglath-pileser I. The kingdom of Damascus and the monarchies and states of Palestine were thus in imminent danger. A new era of mortal struggle for existence had come to them—a struggle only to end, more than a hundred years later, in the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, and the degrading vassalage of all the nations from the Tigris to the Levant. Henceforth all Western Asia trembled at the name of Assyria, for even in Shalmaneser's day, its empire was extended as far as to the Mediterranean. The heavens were black with tempests, driving, with only momentary lulls, across the whole sweep of Syria and Palestine.

Under these circumstances, the single hope of the countries threatened lay in their putting aside all mutual quarrels and uniting against Assyria. One important result of the inglorious peace of Ahab with Benhadad was, therefore, the adherence of the former to a league of the kings and princes of Palestine and Syria, under the supremacy of Benhadad—"the son of Hadad," or Rimmon, the supreme god of Damascus; a title, rather than a name, as Eastern rulers still speak of themselves as "Sons of the Sun," or "of the Moon"—the object of the league being to resist Shalmaneser II. Nor was the alliance long allowed to be merely formal. The Nineveh sultan, eager to widen his empire, invaded Hamath, one of the states of the league, and all its forces

[1] Layard, *Inscrip.*, pl. 46, 47. *Western Asiatic Inscrip.*, III. pl. 7, 8.

were called out to oppose him. This was in the sixth year of his reign. An Assyrian inscription, on the rocks of Armenia, informs us that Benhadad, known on the Tigris as "Hadadezer"—Benhadad being the title of successive kings, apart from their distinctive personal name—led into battle, as commander of the alliance, twelve hundred chariots and twenty thousand infantry, with an attendance of twelve hundred store waggons, with arms of all kinds in reserve. Besides these, his confederates furnished strong contingents. Hamath, on the Orontes, sent seven hundred chariots, seven thousand horse, and ten thousand foot soldiers. Ahab, "of Sirla," sent two thousand chariots and ten thousand infantry; a people called the Guites, but otherwise unknown, sent five hundred men; Egypt sent one thousand; Irkanat, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers; Arvad, two hundred men; Usanat, two hundred; Sizan, thirty chariots and ten thousand foot; Gindibah, of Arba, sent one thousand camels, with a force of his Arab subjects to manage them, and there was a contingent from Ammon.

Crossing the Euphrates, the Assyrian Sultan received tribute, in Pethor, the city of Balaam, at the junction of the Euphrates and Sajur, from the Hittite states. He then marched to Aleppo, where he received more tribute, and, after taking three of the fortresses of the Hittite kingdom of Hamath, on the Orontes, reached the royal city of Karkar or Aroer.

"These twelve kings," says he, "brought help to one another, and came against me to war and battle. Through the high powers given me by Assur, the Lord, and the mighty weapons of the god Nergal who goes before me, I fought with them, and put them to rout from the city of Karkar to the city of Gilzan. Karkar, I threw down, I dug

up, I burned with fire. I slew fourteen thousand of their armed men. Like the Air-god Rimmon, I bade the storm of war pour forth against them (fierce as the storms he lets loose on men). I filled the waters with them in their flight, and laid low all their armed host. The whole country was not enough to hold their dead bodies. To keep it from becoming a desert I sent thither a vast multitude (from other lands). I pursued them to the river Orontes, and captured on the way their chariots, their cavalry, and their baggage.[1] But the victory had been dearly bought, for Shalmaneser presently retreated.[2] Assyria had now, however, fairly entered on her policy of subduing Western Syria. One of its kings had invaded Phœnicia twenty years before,

HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR IN THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

and forced its cities to pay him tribute, and Shalmaneser was destined to attack Benhadad again three times in the eight years following his doubtful triumph on the Orontes.[3]

The chronology of the kings of Israel and Judah is hardly as yet quite settled. Ewald, Schenkel, Riehm, Conder, Winer, and Maspero alike give a date to Ahab which makes him fifty years earlier than Shalmaneser II., who, however, from the indisputable testimony of his inscriptions, fought against him.[4] The earlier date adopted by these authorities

[1] Sayce, and Menant. [2] Schrader, *Die Keilinschriften*, p. 98.

[3] Schrader, *ibid.*, p. 310. Menant gives the dates of his campaigns against Benhadad as B.C. 855, 851, 850, and 848. In each Shalmaneser, of course, claims the victory. [4] Schrader gives the date of Shalmaneser's reign as B.C. 858–824.

is based on the chronology of the margin of our Bibles, which is shewn by the Assyrian inscriptions to be wrong by more than forty years. The date assigned to Ahab, however, in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser, harmonizes exactly with the dates assigned by other inscriptions to later kings of Israel and Judah. The battle of Karkar, in B.C. 853, was fought, apparently, a short time before Ahab's death, and by the defeat it brought on Syria explains how he was not only able to free himself from vassalage to Damascus, but to ally himself with Judah and make the attempt to recover Ramoth, his frontier fortress, which had been kept from him, treacherously, by Benhadad. There is not, therefore, any sufficient ground for questioning the reference of the name "Ahab" in the inscription, to the king of Israel, or of applying it, as some have done, to a king of the same name in Lebanon—which it is fancied is meant by the word "Sirlai" appended to Ahab's name. But the matter is not, perhaps, capable of a certain decision.

It must have been soon after this, and about four years before Ahab's death, that his last meeting with Elijah took place. On the eastern slope[1] of the hill of Jezreel, close to the city wall, along which one side of the palace of Ahab ran,[2] was a vineyard which had been owned for generations by the family of one Naboth, a man of substance and posi-

[1] 2 Kings ix. 30-36; 1 Kings xxi. 1, 18

[2] 2 Kings ix. 30. It is a matter of dispute whether Naboth's vineyard was at Jezreel or at Samaria. He was a Jezreelite, and owned a piece of land on the eastern slope of the hill of Jezreel. 2 Kings ix. 25, 26. He also had a vineyard, of which the situation is uncertain. The Hebrew text (1 Kings xxi. 1) states that it was in Jezreel; but the Septuagint omits the words "which was in Jezreel," and instead of "the palace," reads "the threshing-floor of Ahab, king of Samaria." But a threshing floor, translated in our version "void place" * (1 Kings xxii. 10) did actually exist before the gate of Samaria.

* The word "gorān" occurs thirty-five times in the Old Testament, and is almost always translated "threshing-floor," or "floor."

tion in the city. Disliking to see the ground of a private citizen so near, Ahab had determined to get possession of this if possible, that he might turn it into a garden of herbs. But Naboth, with the sturdy independence of a Jewish landowner, was unwilling to sell it ; a religious scruple, perhaps, strengthening his objection to part with ground which he had inherited from his forefathers.[1] The rights of proprietors could not be lightly invaded. Omri had formally bought the hill of Samaria, and David the threshing-floor of Araunah. It seemed as if the king must yield, and to do so fretted his self-love and made him heavy and displeased. Like a petted child when crossed, he threw himself moodily on his bed and refused to eat.

If he, however, was cowed and beaten, Jezebel, his wife, was not. He had some scruples ; she, none. That any one should dare to refuse to gratify the king was an insult to the throne. If Ahab really wanted the vineyard, she would get it for him. Writing a letter in his name, and duly authenticated by the royal seal, to the elders and chief men of Samaria, she commanded them to proclaim a fast, as at the occurrence of some great public calamity. High treason had been committed, and the wrath of the gods must be deprecated. Naboth was to be put at the head of the assembly,[2] and, when thus brought into prominent notice, was to be accused as the criminal, by hired false witnesses, so common in all ages in the East. It was to be asserted that he had cursed God and the king. His only offence, of course, had been keeping his own property when Ahab wished him to sell it. Largely dependent on the court, and daunted by the fierce energy and unscrupulousness of Jezebel, the elders

[1] Land was really held among the Hebrews in a strict entail for their posterity. Its alienation was forbidden by the law. Lev. xxv. 23.

[2] Josephus.

had not spirit to resist, and carried out her murderous plan. Naboth, having been charged with the crime, was at once condemned, and forthwith hurried outside the town walls, by night, and stoned to death, his sons also sharing his fate, for they too must be destroyed to secure the vineyard.[1] To add iniquity to the murders, the mangled bodies were left unburied, the greatest insult that could be paid to the dead. Worse still, the prowling dogs and swine[2] of the town were allowed to devour them ; and it was noticed that the blood ran into a tank at hand, which was the common bathing place of the prostitutes of the temple of Baal.[3]

The long seclusion of Elijah had apparently made Ahab almost forget him, or fancy that he was, at last, fortunately dead. But he found to his dismay that he was still alive. The news of Naboth's death had been brought to her husband, at once, by Jezebel ; and though he had not had the courage to commit the crime, he was willing enough to enjoy its results. Calling his chariot, therefore, he rode off to the vineyard, attended by two officers, Jehu and Bidkar, in a second chariot,[4] to take possession of his ill-gotten spoil. He had done so, and was riding cheerily home again, when the dreaded apparition of Elijah stopped the way. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" gasped the king. "I have found thee," replied the prophet, and proceeded to announce that his apostasy and crimes would be punished by the total destruction of his House. As to himself, moreover, the town dogs would lick up his blood in the same place as they had licked that of Naboth, and the temple prostitutes would wash themselves in it as they bathed in the tank.[5] Nor would Jezebel escape. The dogs would

[1] 2 Kings ix. 26. Yesterday = yesternight.
[2] Septuagint.
[3] 1 Kings xxi. 19 ; xxii. 38. Septuagint.
[4] 2 Kings ix. 25.
[5] 1 Kings xxi. 19. Septuagint.

devour her under the wall of Jezreel, and her sons, sharing a similar fate, would be left to the dogs and the vultures.[1] Appalled by such a curse, Ahab rode back to Samaria gloomy and alarmed. Rending his clothes, putting on rough sackcloth, and even sleeping in it; refusing food and bearing himself with broken contrition—only, however, too short-lived—the doom was held back for a generation.

The defeat of Benhadad in various contests with Assyria, had emboldened Ahab to break his league with him, after three years of peace; the surrender of Ramoth Gilead, one of the towns Syria had agreed to give back to Israel, being still deferred. He was now in the twenty-second year of his reign; his southern neighbour, Jehoshaphat, being four years his junior as king. The policy of Omri, begun with Asa, had been continued by their sons. Instead of war, the most friendly relations had been cultivated, though Jehoshaphat was as zealous for Jehovah as Ahab and Jezebel for Baal. The wish for mutual safety, by union, was undoubtedly the great motive for the alliance, but it was regarded with unfavourable eyes by the prophets and more thoughtful citizens of Judah.[2] A visit of the southern king to his northern brother was now, however, arranged; and, for the first time since the division of the monarchy, a king of Judah was a guest of a king of Israel. Delighted with this proof of confidence, Jehoshaphat's entrance to Samaria was celebrated by Ahab with great rejoicings and public festivities; and the two appeared together from time to time, in state, before the people. Resolved to get possession of Ramoth, but afraid to undertake the campaign alone, Ahab felt that this royal visit was an excellent opportunity for securing help, and proposed that Jehoshaphat should join

[1] 1 Kings xxi. 24. [2] 2 Chron. xx. 35, 37.

him; nor did the southern king feel free to refuse. While ready, however, to join in strict alliance with his brother of Israel, he was too religious to think of acting without Divine sanction, given through the prophets. No fewer than 400 having therefore been collected, a favourable answer was at once given by them to Ahab. Something, however, had roused the suspicions of Jehoshaphat; for a courtly desire to stand well with the king had already corrupted the order to a large extent, and made their utterances false and misleading. One day, therefore, when both kings sat on their thrones, in full armour,[1] at the open space, outside the gate of Samaria,[2] where the troops were mustered, the crowd of prophets was once more brought before them, but they only repeated the assurance of victory already given. One, indeed, went so far as to put on his forehead horns of iron, and push, ox-like, with them, as a sign that Ahab, the bull of Ephraim, would drive the Syrians before him. Still Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. "Was there no other prophet of Jehovah?" There was only one, Micaiah, the son of Imlah, but he always prophesied evil of the king. To please Jehoshaphat, however, he was sent for, and brought from the prison into which Ahab had thrown him at an earlier date. But even he at first prophesied success. Yet it was evident he was not in earnest. He had refused to mould his answer to the king's wishes, or to speak otherwise than Jehovah dictated; and now, on being adjured to tell all his mind, delivered a gloomy foreboding of defeat and death. "I saw all Israel," said he, "scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have not a shepherd, and Jehovah said, These have no master; let them return every man to his house in peace." Ahab's conviction that no good would be foretold

[1] Ewald, vol. iii. p. 538. [2] *Land and Book*, p. 27.

to him was fulfilled; his death was predicted. Nor was this all. Micaiah added that he saw a vision in which the spirit that leads men astray had come from before God, to entice Ahab to his ruin, and that it had entered into the 400 prophets for this end.[1] Infuriated at such an exposure, Zedekiah, the prophet who had pretended to gore those round him with the iron horns, struck Micaiah on the cheek, asking him, as he did so, how he durst say that the spirit of true prophecy had departed from him and been given to himself. The striker was the court favourite; the prophet struck, a man despised and maltreated; but he sternly answered that the proof would be seen when Zedekiah, after the victory of the Syrians, would eagerly hide in an inner chamber to escape. Unpleasant truth is ever more unwelcome, however, than flattering falsehood, and Micaiah was instantly handed over again to the governor of the city and the official in charge of prisoners—Joash, the king's son—with orders to give him only bread and water, and that as sparingly as would keep him alive,[2] till the king should return in peace. "If ever you return in peace," retorted Micaiah, as they led him off, "Jehovah has not spoken by me."

But the gloomy prediction proved only too true. The march of the allied armies of Israel and Judah forthwith began, and they soon came up with the Syrian forces. Resolved to avenge himself for his humiliation by Ahab, Benhadad had given orders to his chariot officers to make straight for him in the battle, and be sure, above all things,

[1] In connection with the vision of a "lying spirit" being put in the false prophets, or traitor-apostate prophets, it is noteworthy that in all diseases, as well as moral obliquities, the Babylonians regarded demons as the active agents. All sickness was ascribed to a demon having been eaten with the food, or drunk with the water, or breathed in the air, and, until he was expelled, "cast out," there was no chance of recovery. The pestilence striking a district was the work of the great gods through a divine being like the Jewish angel of death, sent to take vengeance on men for their misdeeds. Sayce, *Hibbert Lect.*, 310.

[2] Hebrew. 1 Kings xxii. 27.

of killing him or taking him alive. The struggle took place outside Ramoth Gilead ; but Ahab, having apparently learned the design of the enemy, disguised himself before entering the battle. Jehoshaphat had retained his kingly armour and ornaments, but his death would have provoked a permanent feud with Judah, which Benhadad wished to avoid. When, therefore, his chariot force had surrounded the only figure they saw that seemed like Ahab's, it was enough that Jehoshaphat called his name aloud to have his pursuers turn aside. But no disguise could avail the doomed king of Israel. A chance arrow, fired without an aim, struck him between the breast-plate and the lower part of his armour, sinking deep into his body. He would not, however, yield. Stanching the blood as he best could, he resolutely held himself up in his chariot during the battle, lest his disappearance should dispirit his men. But the flow of blood went on apace, till there was a pool in the hollow of the chariot, and at last, as evening approached, he swooned and died. He had been nobler in death than at any moment in his life.

With Ahab's death, the war was at once virtually ended. As the sun set, and the news ran through the host, a cry rose, "Every man to his own city and his own place!" and the army forthwith melted away. The corpse, brought back to Samaria, was duly buried in the royal tomb. Micaiah had been vindicated. Nor had the words of Elijah fallen to the ground. The chariot was taken to the town pool, the blood dripping from it and from the armour, as they were being cleansed, and running back into the tank. Such a sight was naturally long remembered, and men told their sons how the dogs were noticed licking up the dead king's blood, and how, when the temple courtesans shame-

lessly bathed in the pool next morning, its waters were still tinged with red.

Ahab was peaceably succeeded by his son Ahaziah, the first case in the northern kingdom of the third generation of a dynasty ascending the throne. Able and enterprising, the new sovereign might have left his mark in history but for his untimely end, after a reign of only two years. The death of his father at Ramoth Gilead had left the whole country east of the Jordan at the mercy of the Syrians, and had so weakened his hold on Moab that it refused to pay any longer the yearly tribute of 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams, with their wool, which had been exacted from it for fully eighty years.[1] Details of a period so remote very rarely survive; but, fortunately, the discovery of the Moabite Stone in recent years has thrown a light as interesting as it was unexpected on this passage of history. This unique relic was first seen in 1868 by Dr. Klein, an Alsatian, in the service of the English Church Missionary Society. It is a slab of blue-black basalt, about three feet nine inches high, shaped like a headstone, and stood beside a cromlech, close to the wall of the ancient Moabite town of Dibon. An inscription of thirty-four lines covered its one side, and promised to be of great value, but while the representatives of France and Germany, in Jerusalem, intrigued, in opposition to each other, with the local Arabs to secure it, these wild creatures quarrelled about it, and partially destroyed it by kindling fire against it and then dashing cold water over it. Part of the inscription was thus destroyed, but much the larger part remained, and was ultimately bought for the Louvre, in Paris, where it now is.

The name of the king of Moab at this time, as we learn

[1] 2 Kings iii. 4, 5.

both from this invaluable document and from the Bible, was Mesha. His father, he tells us on it, had reigned thirty years, and had paid the tribute exacted from him by Israel. The country, though not so large as the county of Huntingdon,[1] was so prosperous that its half-nomadic shepherd population had not only borne this enormous tax, thanks to the rich upland pastures of the Mishor—but had accumulated great wealth, as shewn by the immense plunder seized by Jehoshaphat a few years later, after their defeat at Berachah.[2] The impost, however, must nevertheless have been alike burdensome and galling; even Mesha himself, as the greatest sheepmaster of Moab, having doubtless to pay heavily from the crown flocks. The crisis in Israel at the death of Ahab was, therefore, seized as a favourable moment to strike for independence.

The story is intensely interesting. Mesha tells us that his father's name was Chemosh Gad—"the god Chemosh is my fortune"—and that he was the chief of Dibon, now Diban, a town between two and three miles north of the torrent Arnon. In the citadel of this place, known as Qarha, he and his father had built a "high place" to Chemosh, the national god, in commemoration of his victories over the Hebrews, in the opening of his reign. At his accession, an Israelite force lay hardly a day's march from Dibon, at a place called Me-Deba, a town on a hill in these rich uplands: no doubt to collect the tribute paid to the northern kingdom. It had in turn belonged to the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hebrews, but had been left once more to the Ammonites, till Omri again seized and fortified it for revenue purposes. Threatened thus, on the north, Mesha was equally disturbed on the south of his little

[1] "Moab," in *Dict. of the Bible*. Mesha was a "Dibonite." See Josh. xiii. 9. His father, he tells us, reigned 30 years. [2] 2 Chron. xx. 25.

kingdom, where the Edomites, now subject to Judah, and acting with it in support of Israel, had issued from their hills in Mount Seir, and seized the Moabite town of Horonaim, from which they raided at their will over the whole district.

"I am Mesa, son of Chemosh Gad, king of Moab, the Daibonite," says the stone. "My father reigned over Moab thirty years, and I have reigned after my father, and I have built this bâmat to Chemosh, in Korcha (citadel of Daibon), in remembrance of my deliverance" ("Mesa" means "Deliverance"); "for he has delivered me from the hand of the aggressors, and has enabled me to look with scorn upon mine enemies.

"Omri was king of Israel, and he oppressed Moab during many days, because Chemosh was wroth with his land. And his son succeeded him, and he said also: 'I will oppress Moab during all my days, I will rule over him and humble him, and all his house.' And now Israel is ruined, ruined for ever. And Omri had taken possession of the land of Me-Deba, and he dwelt there (he and his son), and his son lived forty years, and Chemosh has made him perish in my time"—an allusion to Ahab's death at Ramoth Gilead, which fixes the date of the inscription.

With Ahab's death, the whole district north of the Arnon, claimed from the time of Joshua's conquest by Moab, had passed into Mesha's hands, and the confusion in the northern Hebrew kingdom emboldened him to proclaim his independence of Ahaziah, Ahab's successor.

Encouraged by the oracle—that is, the priests of Chemosh, at Dibon—he fortified the town of Baal-Meon, a few miles to the north of Dibon—a place still known as M'ain, where its ruins are very widely scattered over the hill-sides, including foundations of buildings, lines of streets, arches, wells, and

cisterns, with a curious intermixture of primitive cave dwellings, which are certainly very ancient, whatever may be the case with the other remains. There is no trace, however, of the "pools" which Mesha tells us he dug. He also built a place which he called Kiriathaim—"the two towns"—about six miles from Baal-Meon, where extensive ruins of it still cover the ground. Two hours to the south-west of Dibon, lay a town or village called Ataroth, lately rebuilt by the Hebrew king, and from time immemorial a possession of the men of Gad, one of the Twelve Tribes. The site is still known as Attarus, and shews heaps of stones, foundations, cisterns hewn in the rocks, and cave houses. This place, Mesha now attacked and took, killing all the people to please Chemosh, under whose ban they lay, as invaders of his territory, just as Joshua slaughtered various communities in Canaan, as under the ban of Jehovah. No god, in fact, in those days, would suffer any worshippers of another god to live in the bounds over which he ruled. The Gadites had, it seems, a local holy place, and the vessels, or sacred ark from it, Mesha dragged in contempt before the face of Chemosh, at the Moabite town of Kerioth—ending the tragedy by bringing men from other parts to replace the massacred Hebrews.

"Then I built Baal-Meon," says Mesha, "and in it I made pools, and I constructed Kiriathaim. And the men of Gad dwelt in the land of Ataroth from time immemorial, and the king of Israel had built Ataroth for himself. I attacked the city and I took it, and I killed all the people of the city, before Chemosh, the god of Moab, and I carried off the *Arel* of David, and dragged it on the earth, before the face of Chemosh, at Kerioth, and I transported there the men of Sharon, and the men of Meharouth."

Emboldened by this success, he now assailed Nebo, which lay some distance north-west of Dibon, forming with Ataroth the two strong Hebrew posts north of the Arnon. This place also fell before his onslaught, as he tells us, in language wonderfully like that of the sacred writers: "And Chemosh said unto me, 'Go forth, and take Nebo from Israel.' And I went by night, and I fought against the city from the rising of the sun until noon, and I took it, and I killed all the people, seven thousand men and children, and the free women, and the young girls, and the slaves whom I consecrated (as temple prostitutes) to Astar-Chemosh. I carried away from there the vessels of Jahveh (Jehovah) and I dragged them on the earth before Chemosh." Jahaz, another Hebrew post, was also taken and shared the same fate, Chemosh, we are told, driving out the enemy, before the forces of Moab. This was the more a matter of rejoicing, because Ahaziah, roused by the revolt of Mesha, and the fall of Ataroth and Nebo, had marched across the Jordan and made his headquarters at Jahaz, which he strengthened; but his further action had been in some way suddenly checked, perhaps by an invasion from Damascus, so that he was forced to withdraw. It might seem to Mesha as if he were now at last to expel Israel altogether and become finally independent. "And the king of Israel had built Jahaz,[1] and he dwelt there after his war against me. And Chemosh drove him from the city before my face. I took from Moab two hundred men in all, I made them go up to Jahaz, and I took it to add it to Daibon."

Mesha next recounts the buildings which he erected, beginning with those in Korcha. He took measures to strengthen its walls, gates, and towers; adorned it with a

[1] Isa. xv. 4.

royal palace;[1] and made new reservoirs to provide it with water in case of a siege; requiring, besides, that the inhabitants should have private cisterns of their own.[2] He appears, moreover, to have driven out of Korcha all the hated Israelites who had previously lived in it, refusing them permission to remain there any longer. Other towns, all north of the Arnon, also received embellishment at his hands. "I built Aroer and made a military road along (the north side of) the Arnon."[3]

But he must speak for himself, before vanishing again into the thick darkness of long dead ages. "It is I who built Korcha and the wall of the forests and the wall of the hill. I built its gates, and I built its towers. I built the king's palace, and I constructed the reservoirs of water inside the city.

"And there was no cistern inside the city in Korcha, and I said to all the people, 'Make you, every man, a cistern in his house,' and I dug the aqueducts of water for Korcha by means of the prisoners of Israel.

"It is I who constructed Aroer, and who made the road of the Arnon. It is I who constructed Beth-Bamoth, which was destroyed. It is I who constructed Bosor, which was in ruins. . . . Daibon . . . fifty, for all Daibon is subject to me. And I have reached the number of one hundred with the cities which I have added to the land (of Moab). It is I who built Beth-Diblatthaim, Nain, and Beth-Baal-Meon, and I raised the . . . the land El Horonaim, where dwelt . . . And Chemosh said unto me, 'Descend and fight against Horonaim.' . . . Chemosh in my days, the years. . . .

(The remainder of this incomparable document is lost.)

[1] Add, "and constructed dungeons in it." Ganneau and Renan.

[2] "And I dug water-courses to supply Korcha (by the labour of the captives) of Israel." Ganneau and Renan.

[3] Add, "I built Beth Bamoth – the house of the high places – which was destroyed." Ganneau and Renan.

Ahaziah returned to Samaria full, no doubt, of plans for the further prosecution of the war, but Providence had another fate in store for him. The upper windows of Eastern houses often project one or two feet, to form a pleasant look-out and a quiet lounge, a seat running along inside the lattice which serves instead of glass in so hot a climate. While resting on this couch, Ahaziah, by some misadventure —perhaps by inadvertently leaning against the lattice when it was not fastened—fell out into the street below, and was picked up only to be carried to his bed, whence he never rose. Anxious to live, however, but trained by his mother Jezebel in the worship of Baal only, he wearied to know what was before him, and fancied he might do so by inquiring of the oracle of a famous local god. A deputation was therefore sent to the shrine of Baalzebub, a Philistine god, at Ekron, on the Maritime Plain, forty miles south-west from Samaria, in a straight line over the hills. The name, since New Testament times, has been used as that of "the prince of the devils,"[1] but was venerated in Ahaziah's day as connected with an oracle specially in repute for its prophetic powers; Baalzebub himself being worshipped either as the averter of insect plagues, such as flies and locusts, so hurtful in the East, or possibly in the form of a huge fly, or of the scarabæus beetle, sacred among the Egyptians.[2] The Scripture narrative informs us, however, of the ignominious end of this mission, to rebuke which Elijah reappeared for almost the last time. The repeated efforts of Ahaziah to arrest him; the lightning terrors by which, once and again, he was saved; his final journey to Samaria with the awed soldiers, sent a third time to Carmel to secure him; his stern intimation to Ahaziah, face to face, that as a punishment for

[1] Matt. ix. 34; xii. 24, 27. Lenormant's *Divination*, p. 95.

[2] "Beelzebub," in Herzog and Winer. See vol. ii. pp. 168-9; vol. iii. p. 892.

having slighted Jehovah, and consulted a Philistine idol, he would certainly die, are in striking harmony with all his previous life; the enemy of the house of Ahab, the prophet of judgment, the man of mysterious appearances and vanishing.[1]

It seemed now as if the victorious Moabite might take the aggressive and turn against Judah, as he had risen against Samaria. Ahaziah was dead and the Edomites were chafing at their subjection to Jerusalem, thus furnishing a nucleus round which a powerful rising against Jehoshaphat might gather. Such an alliance, therefore, he erelong was able to form. It consisted of the united chiefs of Moab and of the Mehunim—Edomite mountaineers—with a force of Ammonites; Mesha taking the command. Laying their plans carefully, they resolved to invade Judah without warning, and hoped in this way to surprise Jerusalem before it could put itself into a position of defence. The distance was very short, and swift marches might hope to be crowned with success. They had reached the oasis of Engedi,[2] half-way up the west coast of the Dead Sea, having gone round its south end, before news of the inroad reached Jerusalem. The cliff or, rather, "pass" of Engedi, on the west side of that sea—a perilous ascent of twelve hundred feet, by a path which is almost a ladder, impassable to any horse or other animal unused to such terrible climbing—once surmounted, the wild, unencumbered hordes would gain the tableland which stretches to Jerusalem in a succession of stony hills and waterless ravines, till they reached the desolate uplands of Tekoa, now the ruined village of Tekua, five miles south of Bethlehem, and ten from Jerusalem, which was thus in great danger of being seized by a sudden, unexpected attack. In this extremity, Jehoshaphat, true to his office as only the

[1] 2 Kings i. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1837, p. 912. [2] 2 Chron. xx. 1, 2.

vicegerent for God, instantly proclaimed a public fast and humiliation, and himself, in the midst of the congregation assembled in the temple, implored help from the Almighty. Such an example must have kindled a lofty enthusiasm, which of itself would assure victory. A prophet, moreover, announced to the people that Jehovah was with them and would protect them. Meanwhile the enemy was only a few hours distant from the capital. Providentially for Judah, however, a bitter dispute had risen among them ; the Moabites, with their related race, the Ammonites, falling on the Edomites, who resisted fiercely, but were ultimately cut down, as for some cause, devoted and accursed.[1] They may have been suspected of misleading their allies, for the treachery of Edom was proverbial. Or perhaps the quarrel rose from religious fanaticism, for Moab and Ammon had a form of heathenism essentially identical, while Edom seems to have clung to a comparatively purer faith. As the result, however, the Moabites, weakened by the conflict, hastily retreated, so that Jehoshaphat, when he approached in force, found only the deserted camp and a vast number of slain, with so prodigious a booty of silver and gold, rich robes, and costly vessels and jewels, that three days were spent in collecting it. Mesha, proud of his past successes, and trusting to the oracle of Chemosh, had hoped to take Jerusalem itself, but he had only drawn down a catastrophe which was the first step to his ruin. Jehoshaphat had marched out with a choir of Levites in their white robes, chanting the ancient doxology of David—"Praise Jehovah : His mercy endureth for ever"[2]—to rouse the ardour of the host. His return was marked by equal jubilation. Such a deliverance moved all classes of the population. The temple once more

[1] 2 Chron. xx. 23. [2] 1 Chron. xvi. 34.

resounded with psalteries and harps and trumpets, mingling with hymns of triumphant praise of Him who had so visibly appeared, to help the nation. Nor did the nobler spirits of the time fail to contribute their share to the universal rejoicing. The forty-seventh and fifty-eighth psalms are believed to commemorate the great victory, and may have been sung as a Te Deum at the great public thanksgiving on account of it.

Ahaziah, having no son, was succeeded by his brother, Joram; like himself a man of ability and energetic activity; eager to follow up the quarrel with Moab, while weakened by her recent disaster. Jehoshaphat, who had still four years to reign, was now a man of about 55, and had apparently associated his son Jehoram with him on the throne, to lighten his own duties

A Band of Singers and Musicians, Assyria.[1]

[1] The instruments comprise harps played by hand: a dulcimer, played by percussion and by the hand; double flutes and a kind of drum. The music is accompanied by the hands and voices of women and children, led by an eunuch. Six of the men, in all, are eunuchs. The first three figures have one leg raised, as if dancing to their music.

in his advancing years. The two courts of Judah and Israel, always friendly during Jehoshaphat's reign, were, meanwhile, more so than ever, for one result of the ill-omened visit to Samaria had been the marriage of Jehoram, his son, to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel; the inheritress, as it proved, of all the worst qualities of her mother. Joram of Samaria, therefore, easily secured the help of Judah in the further prosecution of the war with Mesha. To make victory certain, a levy of all the available fighting men of Israel was made; and the vassal king of Edom was required by Jehoshaphat to join the expedition with his forces. Marching south to Jerusalem, Joram was joined by the foot and horse of Judah—for cavalry and chariots had been permanently in use since the days of Solomon—and the united armies advanced towards Moab, by the southern route, to meet the contingent from Edom, and to pass along the edge of its territory round the south end of the Dead Sea. Seven days of painful and slow stages had brought them apparently to the Wady el Hesi, the brook Zered of the wilderness life, part of the great water-course marking the boundary between Edom and Moab, and running up to the eastern side of the Dead Sea, at its south end.[1] Usually retaining some water, even in the heat of summer, it was now dry, and the army and its cattle were alike suffering greatly from thirst. Meanwhile, Mesha had gathered all the strength of Moab, from the youngest able to bear the sword girdle,[2] and was close at hand. In this extremity the confederates were saved by the prophetic counsels of Elisha, who had accompanied Joram of Samaria, and was consulted by Jehoshaphat. By his direction a number of pits were dug in the bottom of the wady where they found themselves, to catch

[1] See 2 Kings iii. 21. [2] 2 Kings iii. 21.

and retain the water which, he told them, would presently rush down from the highlands of Moab; though they should neither see wind nor rain, the storm breaking at a distance. Nor were they disappointed, for through the night the prediction was fulfilled.

Mesha and all the fighting power of Moab had, meanwhile, advanced to their boundary, and lay encamped, ready to repel the invasion, probably on the outer slopes of the hills which run along the south of Moab, overlooking the waste to the east.[1] Watching here during the night, they were astir with the first light. But when the sun rose suddenly, as it does in the East, with hardly any twilight, its level beams, red with the morning mists, revealed no enemy, but shone with a blood-red glare on the line of pools in the wady, dug on the preceding evening. No water having existed there before, the appearance was inexplicable, except on the supposition that the confederates had quarrelled, and had destroyed each other, as they themselves had done in their own invasion of Judah. The pools must be the blood of the slain; the survivors had fled, and the deserted camp invited pillage. The cry arose therefore, "Moab to the spoil!"[2] and the host in tumultuous confusion, each eager only to outstrip the other and gain most booty, rushed from the heights. A few moments, and their mistake flashed on them but too vividly. Instead of empty tents, they found a vigorous force ready to assail them. Helpless as sheep, they could only turn and flee; their swift-footed enemies pressing remorselessly behind. All power of resistance in the field was swept away. On rolled the flood of invasion, carrying ruin and death far and near. According to the barbarous custom of antiquity, town after town, open or fortified, was

[1] "Moab," *Dict. of Bible.* [2] 2 Kings iii. 23.

levelled with the ground; the fields and vineyards buried under showers of stones, every soldier, as he passed, helping the desolation; all the wells and cisterns, the fountains of life in a hot country, filled up, and every fruit or timber tree cut down. "The land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."[1] Nothing escaped.

A last despairing stand was made at Kir-haraseth—according to some, meaning "the potter's town;" according to others, "the town on the hill"—now known as Kerak, a town almost impregnable by its position. It stands on an isolated triangular plateau, of from 800 to 1,000 yards on each face, 3,720 feet above the sea, amidst heights still loftier, from which it is cut off on all points except one. Wadys from 1,000 to 1,350 feet deep, with precipitous sides, isolate it on the north and south, and a shallower ravine skirts its third side. The whole triangle has formerly been surrounded by a strong wall, and the rock is scarped a good way down. To an enemy, Kerak is utterly inaccessible, except by winding paths on the west and north-west, and can be entered only at two points, on the north-west and on the south, by dark tunnels, cut for forty paces through the rock. Huge ditches hewn out in the solid rock protect the weaker points; though these may be of later origin.[2]

This last stronghold the confederates now invested, with the intention of destroying it by famine, since they could not hope to take it by direct attack. Meanwhile, the amphitheatre of heights around enabled them to harass it by a constant fire of stones from the Benjamite slingers, and perhaps from the catapults which came into general use in

[1] Joel ii. 3.

[2] Tristram's *Land of Moab*, pp. 70 ff. *Kir-Moab*, in Riehm. Professor Palmer, in *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 26.

sieges, under Uzziah.[1] Unable at last to endure this persistent annoyance, Mesha resolved on a desperate sally at the head of a forlorn hope of 700 swordsmen. The point chosen was that beleaguered by the Edomites, the specially hated foes of Moab, but the attempt to break through was defeated, and the king had to retire again into his citadel. It seemed as if Chemosh had deserted him, and was wroth, for some cause, with Moab. One hope of propitiating him and regaining his favour remained. Balak, centuries before, had had the same thought when sore pressed by Joshua, but had been held back from his purpose by Balaam. He would offer up, as a sacrifice, his first-born son, the heir apparent to the throne, and thus make the most terrible atonement which a country could offer, to appease its offended god. Acting on this dreadful resolution, the king, and his son, were seen by the besiegers to mount the wall, attended by the priests of Chemosh. To the horror of all who lined the surrounding hills, with the city lying in full view below, an altar was now raised, and the lad handed over to the priests, by whom he was openly put to death, and then offered as a burnt sacrifice, to win, if possible, the heart of the god, from whom not even such an offering had been withheld.[2] The awful tragedy, indeed, accomplished its end, but by a means Mesha could not have foreseen, and with which Chemosh had nothing to do. The sight filled the besieging army with horror. Such sacrifices, in the opinion of the Hebrews, polluted a land and laid it under a curse of blood.[3] They would no longer stay in it, but would rather give up all they had won. To remain might bring on them the wrath of the god wooed by such a terrible devotion. The

[1] 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

[2] 2 Kings iii. 26.

[3] Ps. cvi. 37–39.

camp therefore was broken up, and Mesha left unsubdued.[1]

The prosperity of Judah, under Jehoshaphat, suffered no diminution as his reign drew to an end. Dignified, energetic, and true to the ancient faith of Israel, he continued to attract the increasing respect of the neighbouring peoples. The Philistines willingly paid tribute, and Edom, as far as the eastern side of the Red Sea, had long been subdued. Ere his reign closed an attempt had even been made to reopen the sea-commerce with Ophir and India, and a fleet of "Tarshish ships," or "Indiamen," had been built at Solomon's old port, Ezion-geber, on the Gulf of Akabah, at the head of the Red Sea. But a storm had dashed them on the rocks before they set sail, and the enterprise was abandoned. It is noteworthy, however, that there is no mention of help being needed from Tyre in building them, as in the case of Solomon's ships, and that Jehoshaphat felt strong enough to decline overtures from Ahaziah to join him in the undertaking.[2] His death, after a reign of twenty-five years, was a great calamity for his country.

The last years of Jehoshaphat were marked by the close of the great work of Elijah. Elisha had been appointed his successor, and the tired and worn soldier of God was to be allowed to enter on his reward. Only one glimpse of him is given us after Ahaziah's death, till his translation. Jehoram of Judah had been associated with his father on the throne,[3] but had already shewn the sad result of his marriage with the daughter of Jezebel. Turning from the example of his father to that of his wife, he "began to walk in the ways of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab, and to do that

[1] I have adopted the explanation of the words, "And there was great indignation against Israel," 2 Kings iii. 27, given by Bähr.

[2] 2 Chron. xx. 36, 37.

[3] 2 Kings viii. 16.

which was evil in the sight of Jehovah."[1] Elijah had confined his activities to the northern kingdom; Judah, under kings like Asa and Jehoshaphat, needing no such prophet of wrath. But now that the seeds of future heathenism were being sown by Athaliah, working through her husband, he felt impelled to send Jehoram a writing denouncing his evil course and predicting his death. It is the only instance we have of his committing his prophecies to writing.[2]

The narrative of his closing hours leads us to a district hitherto unconnected with his public life. He had shewn himself, till now, so far as we know, only in the neighbourhood of the northern capital—at Carmel, Jezreel, or Samaria. Now, however, he seems to have set out with his attendant Elisha, on a visit to the various schools of the prophets in the south; to rouse them by his words and presence, to the old fidelity, from which, in too many cases, the order was fast sinking. The intimation of his approaching departure came to him at Gilgal; not the place of that name near Jericho, but the present village of Jeljilia, north of Bethel.[3] As his departure approached, the love of solitude seems to have returned to him, or, perhaps, he wished to escape the sorrow of parting with his friend. He therefore sought to be let go on alone to Bethel, whither he had been sent. But true love cannot forsake its object while neighbourhood is possible. "As Jehovah liveth," said Elisha, "and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." At

[1] 2 Chron. xxi. 12–15.

[2] According to the Old Testament chronology Elijah was still alive when Jehoram reigned in Judah, and it is in itself likely that he denounced his sinful course. The mention of a letter or writing from the prophet to him is startling. It is recorded in the Book of Chronicles, which is of a comparatively late date; but there is no improbability that even a spoken prophecy may have been put in writing in the schools of the prophets, and sent to Jerusalem. See Thenius, *in loc.*

[3] 2 Kings ii. 3.

Bethel the great secret had become known, but the faithful attendant would not let it be mentioned; he knew it only too well, already. Thence they journey down to Jericho, and there the same question finds a similar answer. Elijah finally sought to leave Elisha behind, by telling him that God had sent him on to the Jordan; but nothing could keep back a heart so true. At last the two stood on the edge of the river, fifty of the sons of the prophets looking wistfully after them from a distance, to see the end. The sheepskin mantle now became the counterpart of the rod of Moses. Taking it off, and rolling it together, Elijah smote the waters, and "they divided hither and thither, so that the two went over on dry ground." The aged prophet was once more among the hills, in the free air of the wilderness he loved so well. He had only, further, to ask Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken away. "Let a first-born son's double portion[1] of thy spirit be upon me," was the answer. "Thou hast asked a hard thing," replied Elijah, "but thou shalt have it, if thou seest me taken from thee." Conversing thus, the two went on together into the bosom of the hills. "And it came to pass that, as they talked, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." These words seem to point to a sudden storm, the lightnings of which might well look like a chariot and horsemen of fire, though it seems clear that they are only a figure of speech, since it is expressly said that the prophet was carried away from his companion by the rushing whirlwind of the tempests. Indeed, the fact that Elisha, when eagerly urged, gave permission to the "sons of the prophets" to go out and search for his master, and that they did so, of

[1] Deut. xxi. 17. 2 Kings ii. 9, Hebrew.

course without success, for three days, shews that they did not imagine him to have been carried to heaven by the mysterious agency we have come to associate with him as the vehicle of his disappearance.

Overwhelmed with sorrow at his sudden departure, the only thought of Elisha, for the moment, was his own grief. Uttering a bitter cry,[1] "My father, my father, thou art the chariot of Israel: thou hast been its horsemen," an expression afterwards used by King Joash, of Elisha himself, he gazed after him, rending his clothes in his sadness. Presently there fell from Elijah the mantle by which he had been so well known, and then he vanished from human sight, till that night when he appeared once more with Moses on the Hill of Transfiguration, speaking with our Lord of the death presently to be accomplished at Jerusalem. But the gift of the mantle had answered the prayer of his servant: henceforth Elisha had the fulness of his spirit for which he had asked.

Thus ended the grand career of the greatest of the prophets since Moses. Yet his work remained, though he had entered on his glory, for from his life dates that reaction which kindled the zeal of his brethren in succeeding generations, and prepared the way for Him in whom all prophecy was fulfilled.

[1] The word used is employed for the "great and bitter cry" at the destruction of the first-born in Egypt.

NOTE TO PAGE 106. "Bamat" means "high place." It is very noteworthy that while the earlier prophets fiercely denounced the worship of Jehovah under the symbol of the calves of Bethel and Dan, neither Elijah nor Elisha says anything about them or even mentions them. Yet later prophets are as fierce against them as the earlier ones.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPHET ELISHA.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
JORAM, ...	B.C. 896–884	855–844	889–876
JEHU, ...	884–856	844–816	876–847
JEHOAHAZ, ...	856–839	815–799	847–831
JOASH, ...	839–825	798–783	831–815

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
JEHORAM, ...	B.C. 889–885	855–845	883–876
AHAZIAH, ...	885–884	844–843	876
ATHALIAH, ...	884–879	843–838	876–869
JEHOASH, ...	877–839	837–798	869–829
AMAZIAH, ...	839–810	797–769	829–800

Renan puts Amaziah's accession at B.C. 825.

THE appointment of Elisha as the "son" or special disciple of Elijah, appears to have been made seven or eight years before the translation of the elder prophet. A long training was needed for the destined successor of such a man, nor was it fitting that he should come into prominent notice till his master had passed away.

Elijah had been the prophet of wrath and judgment: Elisha came with a gentler mission. The times had in

some measure changed. The worship of Baal was no longer in exclusive favour at court. Joram, Ahab's son and successor, at least tolerated that of Jehovah, though in association with the calf symbols of Bethel and Dan.[1] In after years, under the inspiration of Jezebel, the evil genius of his House, he was to restore Baal worship to its old pre-eminence, but, for the time, the work of Elijah had been

Mount Carmel and the Plain of Acre.

accomplished, and his sternness might with advantage be laid aside. The thunders and lightnings of Horeb had done their part; men could now listen to the still small voice.

Identical in their zeal for God, Elijah and Elisha were, nevertheless, in many respects, very different men. The former had been a child of the wilderness, dwelling far from the abodes of men. The solitudes of Cherith or Carmel had

[1] 2 Kings iii. 2.

been his home. He had shunned intercourse with his fellows, and fled from the artificial life of a town. The free air of the desert had been his vital element; the wild broom of its wadys his shade; the awful wilderness of Sinai his chosen retreat in the supreme hour of despondency. Driven to seek help in the time of famine and persecution, he had sought and found it at a distance from Israel, in the stricken home of a poor and unknown heathen widow.

Elisha was a man of the city; fond of its streets and crowds. Returning from the loss of his master, he had first revisited the schools of the prophets at Jericho and Bethel,[1] to quicken their zeal, and formally take them under his care. A temporary retirement to the Carmel hills, the favourite haunt of Elijah, had followed. Like John the Baptist, or St. Paul, or Luther, he drew apart from men for a time, to gird his spirit to the great work before him. But this over, he returned permanently to the homes and every-day life of his people. Samaria became his residence for many years. He had a house of his own within the town walls, at the foot of the hill.[2] From this centre a wide apostolate was carried on, for well-nigh fifty years, in every direction. Like Samuel, he seems to have made "circuits" over the whole country; rousing and instructing the people at large. So "continually" did he pass by Shunem, the present village of Solâm—now a poor hamlet of rough, flat-roofed stone huts, with some olive and fig trees among them, twenty-five miles north of Samaria, and about three north of Jezreel, on the slope of the Gilboa hills, looking westward from a height of about two hundred feet, over the great Plain of Esdraelon, that a well-to-do villager there prepared a special chamber for his accommodation at successive visits. We may often

[1] 2 Kings ii. 18, 23, [2] 2 Kings ii. 25; v. 3, 9; vi. 32 f.; xiii. 14.

follow him thither, over the endless hills of northern Ephraim, past Engannim, the Spring of the Gardens; over the dark soil of the plain; through Jezreel, with the palace of Jezebel, to the hills beyond, at the foot of which the Philistines had encamped just before the battle of Gilboa.[1] Nain and Endor lay on the other side of the height. It was almost his second home; for his hostess, living in country profusion, had given up to his use the roof chamber or aliyeh, so much esteemed in the East—cool, airy, retired; furnished in keeping with his simple habits; a bed, a table, a seat, and a lamp with its stand, all it contained.[2] He is not unfrequently at Carmel and Dothan, with shorter or longer residence at each;[3] but we find him, also, at Gilgal, in the Ephraim hills, seventeen or eighteen miles south of Samaria.[4] He appears even in the far southern wilderness of Edom, voluntarily accompanying the joint army of Israel on its march against Moab,[5] and then, again, in Damascus, the Syrian capital, fully 125 miles north-east of his own city. His occasional home at Carmel, moreover, was well known, and was the centre of religious gatherings on Sabbaths and new moons.[6] Elijah had kept aloof from the great, but Elisha had frequent relations with two kings, Joram and Joash, and stood on such a footing with them and their highest subjects, that he could promise his Shunammite hostess to speak for her, either to royalty itself, or to the "captain of the host."[7] A citizen among citizens, he moved about amidst the people, leaning on his staff;[8] his dress that of ordinary life; nor do we hear of his wearing

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 4.
[2] 2 Kings iv. 8, 10.
[3] 2 Kings iv. 25; vi. 13.
[4] 2 Kings iv. 38.
[5] 2 Kings iii. 11.
[6] 2 Kings iv. 23.
[7] 2 Kings iv. 13; v. 8; vi. 9, 21, 32; vii. 1; viii. 4; ix. 1; xiii. 14.
[8] 2 Kings iv. 29. Zech. viii. 4.

even the sheepskin mantle of Elijah which he had inherited.[1]

In the quieter times on which his lot had fallen, he had no need for the sternness of his master. The doom of Ahab's house was, indeed, irreversible, and the shadow on the dial was slowly creeping towards the hour of its fulfilment; but when it came it was recognized as the curse uttered long before by the Tishbite, and known to the people as overhanging the dynasty.[2] There is even a gentle tolerance in the younger prophet, hardly to be expected in such an age: as when he listens to Naaman's difficulty about his forced attendance on his master at the temple of Rimmon, the god of Damascus. In every way he shews touches of a softer and calmer nature than that of Elijah. He weeps at the thought of the troubles in store for Israel from Hazael, and the great characteristic of his miracles is a beneficent sympathy with even the poorest.

But though thus tender-spirited by nature, he could be stern when occasion demanded, and, like his master, he knew nothing of the fear of man. Though he bore with Joram while yielding and passive, he could not forget what his father had been, and when duty demanded, turns from him, and bids him consult, instead, the prophets of Ahab and Jezebel;[3] nor does he shrink from denouncing him to the elders of Samaria as the son of a murderer, ready to follow his father's steps.[4] In the punishment of Gehazi, he shews himself prompt and unbending in his severity. One incident, indeed, seems at first sight an outbreak of unwarrantable anger and harshness; the destruction of the

[1] 2 Kings ii. 13.
[2] 2 Kings ix. 26, 36; x. 10.
[3] 2 Kings iii. 13.
[4] 2 Kings vi. 32.

so-called "children," at Bethel. But examination tempers the censure.

The choice of Bethel by Jeroboam as the headquarters of the calf worship, the seat of a grand temple built in opposition to that at Jerusalem, and of a royal palace, had at once flattered and enriched the inhabitants, and kindled their fierce and interested hatred of those who, like the prophets, denounced the royal action. The citizens had become, it would appear, almost the counterparts of the bigoted Mohammedans of Safed or Nablûs, who till very lately insulted any Christian stranger who entered their limits; even the children cursing the "infidel" as he passed. As Elisha was making his way up the hill to the town such an outburst of fanatical hatred greeted him. A band of young men, not children,[1] hurled opprobrious epithets at him as the representative of the ancient faith which they had abandoned. He was to them only a "bald-head," that is, in the old Hebrew vocabulary, a leper, for baldness was a great sign of leprosy; a taunt embodying concentrated hatred and aversion. But it was his religion that was his leprosy in their eyes, for he was still in his early prime, with nearly fifty years of life before him, and physical baldness is not to be thought of.[2] That such a manifestation of resolute and blasphemous irreligion should be followed by a swift and exemplary penalty, is only in keeping with the history of a

[1] The word is *Naar*, and is used of Solomon at his accession, when he was at least twenty years old (1 Kings iii. 7); of Jeremiah, when called to be a prophet (Jer. i. 6, 7); and the companions of King Rehoboam who himself was forty years old when he began to reign, are described by the word Yeled, which is often translated in our version by "child"—*e.g.*, 1 Kings iii. 25; xvii. 21 (see 1 Kings xii. 8, 10, 14; 2 Chron. x. 14)

[2] All consecrated persons, whether priests or Nazarites, were forbidden to shave the hair off any part of their head. Hence baldness was held a disgrace. Lev. xxi. 5. Num. vi. 5. Isa. iii. 17; xv. 2. On this incident see Bähr, *Die B. der Könige, in loc.*

people, among whom sins against religion had often before been marked by similar visitations.

Elijah has left a record of great public acts to which the miraculous was, as it were, subordinate; but while few of the acts of Elisha are mentioned, he is noted for the number of his miracles. Was it because the power and goodness of Jehovah needed to be specially impressed on a people prone to apostatize, and tempted to do so by the rival wonders of the priests of Baal? The times of Moses and Joshua, in which the supreme claims of the true religion had to be urged on the community, in preparation for their seizure of a heathen country, and permanent residence in the presence of idolatry, had been marked by a similar activity of supernatural interposition. So, also, had the close of the era of the Judges, when the smouldering loyalty to Jehovah needed to be rekindled to a flame. Special power to work miracles may, therefore, have been granted to Elijah and Elisha, to strengthen faith in Jehovah at a time when it was in abeyance, and to rouse, if possible, the languid zeal of the nation.

The wonders recorded of Elisha, as has been noticed, are a testimony to his gentle and loving nature. He heals the waters of Jericho, apparently the Sultan's Spring, by casting salt into them from a new cruse, doubtless with due invocation of God, and from that time their bad name as injurious to women and to animals passed away.[1] A prophet's widow has her oil increased, and thus saves her two sons from being sold as slaves, for her husband's debts—an outrage contrary to the law, but permitted in those times.[2]

[1] 2 Kings ii. 19. Thenius. Hitzig.

[2] A man who had mortgaged his property and could not support his family might sell *himself* to another Hebrew, to obtain maintenance, and, it might be, a surplus to redeem his inheritance (Lev. xxv. 25, 29). Michaelis thinks that under this law a

For his childless hostess at Shunem he obtains the gift of a son, the honour most highly prized by Hebrew women, and restores him to life, when, years after, he had suddenly died.[1] He replaces even so slight a loss as that of an axe-head which has fallen through the thickets of the Jordan into the river, as the sons of the prophets are hewing wood to build new huts in their settlement. The deadly herbs,[2] apparently leaves or berries of the colocynth, very abundant and luxuriant round the Dead Sea, brought by one of the community, in the lap of his mantle, and shred into their humble pottage, are made harmless. At Baal-shalisha, in the hills of Ephraim, he gives to the poor the presents brought him, and miraculously increases them, that none may want.[3] If he smites the Syrians with blindness, he speedily removes it; and, while Elijah predicts famine, he foretells plenty.[4]

But though the miracles of Elisha often affected only individuals, and his days passed in the quiet of ordinary life, his influence was wide and powerful. Elijah had lamented at the end of his career the disappointment of his hopes; Elisha's life, if it knew no moments of supreme exaltation, closed amidst universal veneration. For many years he was

creditor could seize his debtor and sell him as a slave; but this inference is unwarranted, for the Hebrew speaks of him as *selling himself*, not as *being sold*. Gesenius, *Thes.*, p. 787. The case in Matt. xviii. 25, is probably borrowed from Roman usages. In Isa. l. 1, the reference is to one who is already a slave.

[1] The boy died of a sunstroke in the glowing harvest heat. Elisha was far off, at Carmel. The mother's falling down and clasping the feet of the prophet were actions still seen every day in the East. The command to Gehazi not to salute any one by the way was equivalent to saying, lose no time in idle compliments; for the formal salutations, then as now, in use, were tedious and protracted (2 Kings viii. 3). The use of the prophet's staff by Gehazi finds a curious illustration in an almost similar use of the staff of a reputedly inspired man in the Polynesian Islands. It was simply held before the sick person, who was expected to recover by its presence.

[2] Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 452.

[3] 2 Kings iv. 38–44.

[4] 2 Kings vi. 18–20; vii. 1.

the foremost subject in the land, for he died under the third king of a dynasty he had founded. Jehoshaphat consults him in war. Joram seeks his advice respecting the treatment of prisoners. Benhadad of Damascus sends to him in sickness. Hazael, the future king, is awed before him, and Naaman listens to him with the lowliest respect.[1] His end is in harmony with such a dignity in his lifetime. In his extreme old age, the king visited him on his sick-bed, to receive his dying counsels, and he was honoured with a splendid funeral.[2] Nor did the veneration in which he was held cease with his life. A splendid monument raised over his grave near Samaria, was shewn with reverence in after ages, and funeral dances were celebrated periodically in his honour round the sacred spot where he lay.[3]

The condition of the kingdom of Judah after the death of the good Jehoshaphat was sad in the extreme. His son Jehoram had been associated with him on the throne for some years, and had reached the age of thirty-two before he entered on his independent reign. His brother-in-law, Joram, the son of Ahab, had already been two years in power at Samaria, after the death of Ahaziah, his brother. The invasion of Moab which reduced Mesha to such extremity, had taken place at the opening of Joram's reign, shortly before the close of that of Jehoshaphat. But, as often happens, the son of one so good and wise proved a painful contrast to his father. Married to Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, he had, from the first, fallen under her influence, which she used to promote the worship of the Phœnician gods, so dear to her race. Men recalled the parallel case of Rehoboam, the slave of his heathen mother,

[1] 2 Kings iii. 11–19 ; vi. 21 ; viii. 7–8, 11–13 ; xiii. 14–19.
[2] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. viii. 6.
[3] Jerome, *Comm. on Obad.* i. 1. *Epitaph. Paulæ*, § 13.

Naamah the Ammonitess, and of his wife Maachah, the granddaughter of Absalom, who was a zealot for idolatry.[1] As in the previous century, so also now, female influence was introducing heathenism into Judah. Athaliah was the close counterpart of her mother, and was destined to play even a more terrible part. The fierce, determined energy; the fanatical zeal for Phœnician superstition; the utter unscrupulousness alike of heart and conscience which characterized Jezebel, were as marked in her daughter. We see her hand already in the opening act of her husband's reign. Following the hateful policy of Eastern rulers, he signalized his accession by the murder of his brothers, six in number. Jehoshaphat, like Rehoboam, had withdrawn them from luxurious idleness, by appointing them over different fortified towns, with separate private establishments. But their birth no less than their local dignity was a crime in the jealous eyes of Jehoram. Numbers of officials and others supposed to favour them, shared their fate, that the throne might fear no disturbance. The mere tool of his wife, he let her have her way in promoting idolatry. High places to Baal and Ashtoreth rose in the towns of Judah.[2] The worship of Jehovah in the temple was still permitted, but heathenism, thus favoured by the court, threatened to cover the land. Elijah, who was alive at Jehoram's accession, had sent him a stern denunciation of his apostasy and his crimes, but it had no effect on Jehoram's course. Weak and incapable alike as a man and a king, his reign was a succession of public humiliations which reduced the country to such weakness that it seemed as if the "lamp" promised to burn in the House of David

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. x. 1. 1 Kings xv. 13. 2 Chron. xv. 16. She was descended from Tamar.

[2] 2 Chron. xxi. 1–11. For "mountains" read "towns."

must have gone out, but for the faithfulness of Jehovah to His covenant.[1]

Under the strong and firm hand of Jehoshaphat, Edom had been incorporated once more in the dominions of Judah, under a vassal king,[2] but the weakness of Jehoram encouraged its revolt. Longing to regain the independence lost under David, it rebelled, perhaps in alliance with Moab, and set up a scion of its ancient princely House as king.[3] The Jews in the country were murdered,[4] and a fierce resolution to die for freedom, if necessary, filled all breasts. Jehoram invaded the wild mountains of Seir[5] with infantry and chariots, but only to find himself hopelessly surrounded, and to be forced to save himself and part of his army by cutting his way by night through the enemy.[6] Edom was lost, and remained for fifty years independent. Encouraged by its success, the Philistines also rose. Libnah, on the sea-coast lowlands, an old Canaanite royal city, and afterwards a Levitical town[7] under Joshua, revolted and joined them. Gath, the capture of which had been one of the glories of David's reign, regained its independence,[8] and even assumed the aggressive. The Philistines, in alliance with Arab

[1] 2 Chron. xxi. 7, 12–15. In 2 Kings viii. 19, it is said that "Jehovah would not destroy Judah for David His servant's sake, as He promised him to give him alway a light," etc. This expression alludes to the universal custom in the East of keeping a light burning all night in each house. Even the poorest woman rises through the night to trim her lamp, and it would be the worst of omens if it went out. This custom illustrates many texts; among others: 1 Kings xi. 36; xv. 4. Job xviii. 5, 6; xxi. 17. Prov. xiii. 9. Jer. xxv. 10. Rev. xviii. 23.

[2] 1 Kings xxii. 47. 2 Kings iii. 9.

[3] 2 Kings viii. 20. 2 Chron. xxi. 8.

[4] Joel iii. 19. Hitzig, p. 88, "Joel."

[5] 2 Kings viii. 21 reads "Zair," but the Vulgate renders it Seir. Graetz and Ewald think of Zoar, the palm city, at the south corner of the Dead Sea.

[6] 2 Kings viii. 21. 2 Chron. xxi. 9.

[7] Josh. xii. 15; xv. 42. Libnah was afterwards reconquered, as it appears in the list of fortified towns of Judah besieged by Sennacherib. 2 Kings xix. 8.

[8] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 564.

tribes[1] from the south, assailed Jerusalem. Desolating the country and carrying off multitudes of the people as slaves,[2] they finally stormed the city, sacking the palace and capturing all the royal family and the king's harem; Jehoahaz, afterwards known as Ahaziah, alone, of the royal family, escaping.[3]

A reign so disastrous and so obnoxious to the national instincts in its religious policy, alienated the people. A court faction, which supported Queen Athaliah in her heathen tastes, had already sprung up, but it had as yet no hold on the population at large. Jehoram, moreover, seemed in his own person to be judged and punished for his course, by a long and agonizing internal disease which had struck him down. When, therefore, he died, no pretence of regret was heard; the customary funeral honours of a king were denied him, and his body, refused admission to the royal tombs, was buried in a separate spot inside the walls.[4] The apostate could not be allowed to sleep in the sepulchre of David.

The incident of Naaman's visit to Elisha falls apparently in these years. Syria had recently been victorious over both Israel and Judah, at Ramoth Gilead, where Ahab fell, and thus stood in a triumphant relation towards the northern kingdom, which it still continued to harass by raids into its territory, for booty and slaves. When, therefore, we are told that "the Lord, by Naaman, had given deliverance to Syria," it cannot refer to its position towards Israel, but the

[1] The Arabs were in the pay of the Philistines in the time of Alexander the Great. Hitzig, vol. i. p. 201.

[2] Amos i. 6–8.

[3] Zöckler, *Die B. der Chroniker*, ii. c. 21, v. 17, thinks that only the royal camp was taken, since there is no mention of the temple being sacked. The Septuagint has Ahaziah instead of Jehoahaz. See 2 Kings ix. 22, 29.

[4] 2 Chron. xxi. 19, 20.

Assyrian inscriptions throw light on the matter. Assur-nazir-apli had a few years previously overrun the whole of Northern Syria—then Hittite—and had received the submission of Tyre and Sidon. But as regards Phœnicia and Syria at least, the conquest was not permanent. As soon as he had retired, Damascus threw off the yoke; and when his son, Shalmaneser II., succeeded him, B.C. 859, Syria paid no tribute. In the seventh year, and again in the eleventh year of his reign, Shalmaneser tells us, as we have seen,[1] that he led his armies against Benhadad of Damascus, and defeated him; but in neither case does he claim to have carried off trophies, imposed tribute, or received submission. We may, therefore, safely infer that the Syrian resistance had been successful. These campaigns occurred in the beginning of the reign of Joram of Israel, and it is evident that Naaman had been the successful general who thus repelled the invader, so that we have in this incident an undesigned coincidence of the highest value in support of the historical accuracy of the Old Testament history.

But, unfortunately for himself, Naaman was now a leper. In Israel this would have disqualified him for public duty, and it was probably an equal disqualification at Damascus. What this awful disease implies in the East may be imagined from the following petition by one afflicted with it, to Lord Lawrence, while Viceroy of India:

"Hail, cherisher of the afflicted! Be it known to your enlightened mind that your devoted servant has been a leper for many years. My limbs have fallen off piece by piece; my whole body has become a mass of corruption; I am weary of life; I wish to die. My life is a plague and disgust to the whole village, and my death is earnestly longed for.

[1] See p. 89.

It is well known to all that for a leper to consent to die, to permit himself to be buried alive, is approved of by the gods, who will never afflict another individual of the village with a similar malady. I therefore solicit your permission to be buried alive. The whole village wishes it, and I am happy and content to die. You are ruler of the land, and without your leave it would be criminal. Hoping that I may obtain your permission, I pray that the sun of prosperity may ever shine on you. RAM BUKSH, *Leper.*"

This petition, it is hardly necessary to say, Lord Lawrence did not grant, but the unfortunate leper was, nevertheless, buried alive a day or two afterwards.[1]

I have myself seen a leper in Norway covered with shining scales like a fish, terrible to behold, and I have also shrunk back from hideous groups of lepers at St. Stephen's Gate and the Valley of the Kedron at Jerusalem. The Norwegian form of the disease illustrates Gehazi's fate in leaving the presence of Elisha, "a leper as white as snow," for the scales gleamed white over the whole skin; but the Palestine form of it is even more revolting, the features becoming swollen and monstrous, the fingers and toes rotting off, and the whole body corrupt, though the colour of the skin darkens rather than grows pale.

A Hebrew slave girl's prattle to his wife, her mistress, about the prophet at Samaria, who could cure her master, led to his hearing of Elisha. Eagerly catching at any chance, he laid the matter before Benhadad, and not only received permission to go to Samaria, but bore with him a royal autograph letter from his sovereign to Joram, asking his kind offices in the strange mission. To come before any

[1] Speech of the Prince of Wales in 1890, in London.

one without a gift when a favour was to be asked, would have been inexcusable rudeness; but when the favour was health, and the personage approached a man who had power with the god of his country, no bounty could be too great to propitiate his good-will. The priests of Damascus would have taken any gift offered them, as a matter of course, and Elisha, it was assumed, was like them in this respect. Naaman carried with him, therefore, ten talents of silver, worth about £3,750, and 6,000 pieces of gold, worth twice as much,[1] and ten costly robes; part to be given beforehand, the rest when he was cured. The terror of Joram at Benhadad's letter, asking him to cure Naaman's leprosy, "as if he were God," or could raise a man from this living death, is vividly painted in the sacred narrative. The Syrian finally draws up with his chariot and escort at the humble door of the prophet; taking for granted that Elisha would at once come out to one in his high position. In the East, the exact mode of meeting and receiving a guest is one of the most important parts of social etiquette. The host is generally seated on a cushion, carpet, or mat, exactly in the centre of the side of the room opposite to the door, on the raised dais which is commonly to be found in an Eastern hall or guest-chamber. If the visitor be of inferior rank, the host remains seated, while the other advances, making a salaam or obeisance at each step, the form of which differs according as he is a slave, a freeman, a messenger, a suppliant, or a trader. If he be of equal or nearly equal rank, the master rises and makes a step or several steps forward. And, as I have myself often experienced, in exact proportion to the number of his paces is the amount of consideration shewn to the guest by the servants and others. But if

[1] Keil.

an inferior is honoured by the visit of a superior, all propriety demands that he should at once come forward and meet his visitor before or outside his door. Elisha, however, would humble the pride of Naaman. The message sent to him by Gehazi, to wash seven times in Jordan, seems a designed affront, for he cannot realize that the prophet, as the representative of Jehovah, is greater than kings, or that he shrinks from appearing in person before one who had done so much harm to his people. That the muddy waters of Jordan should heal him appears like mockery. Did not the clear mountain streams from Lebanon—Abana and Pharphar—the Barada and its principal confluent, flow through Damascus?[1] The Jordan can no more bear comparison with these streams than the bare hills of Israel can compare with the garden-forests of the "City of the Sun." Turbid and discoloured from the time when it leaves the clear blue lake of Galilee, till it enters the lifeless basin of the Dead Sea; twisting and writhing in its lonely course through the deep, solitary, and, for the most part, desolate valley; without even an isolated human habitation on its banks, and only a narrow belt of trees and verdure on each side to mark its course—the Jordan, apart from its history and the phenomena of its sudden birth and exit, has nothing to attract. But the Abana—or, as it is now called, the Barada—the river to which the beauteous oasis of Damascus owes its beauty and its very existence—winding from the Anti-Lebanon through a deep green zone, its waters clear and transparent as crystal, dashing through rocky dells, or buried from sight under the foliage of a forest of fruit trees of every kind—was justly the Syrian's proudest boast. No wonder that the limpid Abana seemed to Naaman worthier

[1] The Greeks called the Abana "the golden stream," from its clear beauty.

than the muddy Jordan! If bathing were the cure, why not that rather than the turbid river of Israel? But quiet counsel from his attendants leads to wiser thoughts; Naaman frankly complies and is healed. Yet Elisha will take no reward. The gifts of Jehovah are free. His prophet is not a greedy heathen priest.

It is in keeping with the ideas of the age, that the grateful Syrian should ask leave to carry back to Damascus two mules' burden of earth to build an altar to Jehovah on the soil of His own land; on which alone, as men then thought, He could be rightly honoured. The altar, moreover, would be a memorial to the God of Israel in a foreign land,[1] like the synagogue raised, ages later, by the Jews of Nahardea, in Persia, all the stones and earth of which had been brought from Jerusalem.[2] He makes only one request more, and this the prophet, with a fine anticipation of Christian charity, tacitly grants. When his master, leaning on his arm, required him to go into the temple of Rimmon, and he had to prostrate himself before the god, he trusted it would not be reckoned disloyalty to Jehovah, whom alone he would henceforth really worship. Gehazi's punishment[3] for treacherous meanness which compromised not only Elisha, but the true religion itself, is a fitting pendant to the story. In the natural course of things he doubtless expected to follow Elisha, the leading prophet of his age. His master had thus followed Elijah, to whom his relations had been similar. But in his heart he was unworthy, and instead of inheriting the spiritual honours that seemed to await him, he became the founder of a race of lepers bearing on their foreheads the mark of their accursed ancestry.

While thus tender and pitiful even to a public enemy in

[1] Bähr, *Die B. der Könige*, p. 288. [2] Benjamin of Tudela. [3] 2 Kings v. 27.

his affliction, Elisha was none the less loyal and vigilant on behalf of his own people. The frequent incursions of the Syrians found no more watchful eye on them than his, and were foiled by him again and again.[1] A great effort was at last, however, made by Benhadad to retrieve his uniform failures in the past. Collecting the whole force of his kingdom, he once more besieged Samaria, from the walls of which he had retreated ignominiously about ten years before.[2] Closely investing it, his troops, looking down from the neighbouring hills, could see the misery of the citizens, which ere long became terrible. The head of an ass, though that of an unclean beast, was gladly bought for eighty shekels, or about eight pounds sterling,[3] while a pint of "dove's dung,"[4] perhaps the name of some small pea or vetch, brought five shekels,[5] or about fifteen shillings. Such misery was unendurable. Face to face with death, the wretched population grew desperate, even mothers killing their children for food. Elisha, who was in the town, urged resistance to the uttermost, promising deliverance from God. Joram, however, shocked by overhearing a dispute in which two women wrangled about killing and eating their infants; instead of blaming his own character and weak rule, turned against the prophet for having opposed surrender. He was making his wonted round along the broad top of the city wall at the time, and rent his outer robe in grief, at the awful revelation, vowing vengeance on Elisha. King as he was, he had fasted, and worn sackcloth

[1] 2 Kings vi. 8-23. [2] 1 Kings xx. [3] Thenius.

[4] The cab was the fourth part of a seah = two quarts. So say the Rabbis. Bähr. The soap plant is called "sparrow's dung" by the Arabs. Plutarch mentions a siege in which an ass's head was hardly to be bought for sixty drachmas, though in ordinary times a live ass cost only twenty-five or thirty, and Pliny says that in Hannibal's siege of Casulinum, a mouse sold for 200 denarii = about £6. Plut., *Artaxerx.*, 24. Plin., *Hist. Nat.*, viii. 57. [5] Thenius.

next his skin[1] at the prophet's words, and yet they had come to nothing. The author of so much misery should die. An attendant was therefore sent to Elisha's house with orders to behead the prophet. But the seer was on his guard. Hearing the feet of some one approaching, he ordered the elders of the city, who were with him, to press against the door, and keep it from being opened.[2] "Joram, the son of a murderer," cried he, "has sent to kill me." Presently the king himself arrived, and broke out, in his excitement, with the words—"What good is there in waiting any longer for deliverance from Jehovah? He has let things come to such a pass that mothers are killing and eating their own children!"[3] But the answer was none the less calm and trustful. "To-morrow, about this time," he was told, "plenty will reign in Samaria." "If Jehovah, your God, make windows in heaven and rain down food for us from them, it may be so, but not otherwise," muttered one of the officers in attendance. "You shall see the plenty," replied Elisha, "but not taste it."

As in other Eastern cities, and, indeed, at Samaria itself, at this time, some lepers had their miserable huts outside the city gates, not being permitted to enter the town. Famine had made them desperate. No food was any longer passed out to them. To steal into the city would only be to die; to go to the Syrian army could bring no worse. They would go. In the meantime, a sudden panic had seized the host of Benhadad. They had heard noises in the air which seemed like the sound of horses and chariots and the other forces of a great host. "The king of Israel has hired the northern Hittite princes and the southern Egyptian kings[4]

[1] 2 Kings vi. 30. [2] 2 Kings vi. 32. [3] *Ibid.*, ver. 32.

[4] Everywhere else in the Bible the king of Egypt is spoken of, the country being under a single ruler. But the number of royal names which have been recently dis-

against us, and they are surrounding against us," ran from lip to lip of the army, and struck its battalions with a deadly, unreasoning terror. Precipitately abandoning their quarters, with the tents, horses, asses, and warlike stores, they thought only of their lives, and fled in wild confusion, leaving the encampment forsaken when the lepers reached it. The great news having been carried back to Samaria, the remnant of armed men in the city sallied forth only to find the whole track of the fugitives strewn with evidences of their headlong flight, and before night the famished citizens, thus saved, had feasted on the plenty left behind, and enriched themselves with the spoils of the tents. The crowding at the city gate had been terrible, but it was noticed that no life was lost except that of the officer who had ridiculed the hope of deliverance. Thrown down in the crush, he had been trampled to death.

Famine, as usual, followed in the footsteps of war. Elisha's hostess, the Shunammite, left her house and land on the slopes of Gilboa, being advised by the prophet to do so, as he foresaw seven years of drought and bad harvests, and she had gone down to the Philistine plains, living there through the bad years. Meanwhile, some greedy local sheik had seized her home and fields, so that she had to

covered, proves that there were at this time many contemporary princes on the Nile. New light has also been thrown, in the last few years, on the position and power of the Hittites at the same period. We find that the nation was a great confederacy under a number of petty kings, and that its power extended over the whole of Syria, north of Damascus, and over all the country between the Tigris and Euphrates, north of Assyria. Its capitals were Carchemish, on the Euphrates, and Hamath, in Syria, on the Orontes. The Hittites, at this very period, were the natural allies of Egypt against the growing power of Assyria, which actually did finally crush their nationality by the capture of Carchemish, B.C. 717. From the numerous inscriptions of Nineveh, we know that at this time the Hittites were distinguished for "their swift chariots, their horses, and their engines of war." The inscriptions often speak of their formidable chariots, those chariots for which, as his feudatories, Solomon provided horses, at a fixed price, out of Egypt. All these details of Hittite history have only lately been exhumed.

seek the king on her return, and use an Oriental's right of direct appeal to him, for their restitution, which, strangely, she owed to the interposition of Gehazi, who called attention to her as the woman whose child Elisha had raised to life. Elisha, partly it may be from the famine, and perhaps, also, from his strained and painful relations with Joram, since the siege and the threat of the king to murder him, had to betake himself to Damascus, where a change of dynasty was imminent. Benhadad II., unfortunate alike in his wars with Israel and Assyria, and hence, no doubt, unpopular, had fallen sick. Hearing of Elisha's arrival, and remembering Naaman's cure, he sent to him eagerly as to an oracle, to learn his hopes of recovery. The spot is still pointed out, four miles from the city, where tradition affirms that Hazael, an officer of high position at the Syrian court, the envoy from the king, met the prophet; a long train of forty camels, laden with "everything good" in the city, following the cavalcade, to reward the seer.[1] "Benhadad *might* recover, but *would* die," was the ominous answer; the eyes of the prophet resting long and sadly on Hazael, as he spoke, and his tears flowing freely at the thought of the miseries the Syrian would cause Israel.[2] Quailing before the gaze thus fixed on him, Hazael turned aside confused and ashamed, resenting the imputation of treason. Next day, however, Hazael was king.[3] He, or some one commissioned by him, had overpowered Benhadad in his bath, and had suffocated him with the wet cloths he had been using, or the quilt on which he had been lying. The murder took

[1] The gifts to prophets and temples were sometimes immense. See Herod., i. 54-57. They were likewise paraded on as great a train of horses or animals as might be, to heighten their effect.

[2] 2 Kings viii. 12.

[3] Schrader, *Keilinschriften*.

place, it would seem, between the fourteenth and eighteenth years of Shalmaneser II., of Nineveh.

Benhadad, though brave, had been unsuccessful. Assyria had repeatedly defeated him; Israel had put his armies to flight once and again, and the various Syrian kings who had been his vassals had revolted.[1] It was incumbent, therefore, on Hazael, who is mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as the successor of Benhadad,[2] to restore the honour of the State, and to this he devoted a fierce and able energy. Notwithstanding treaty engagements, the Israelitish town of Ramoth Gilead, a fastness on the east of Jordan, and the key to the district of Argob and Jair, had been held by the Syrians since its seizure by Benhadad I. in the reign of Omri.[3] Ahab had perished in an attempt to recover it, and Ahaziah had died while preparing for a second expedition with the same object. Joram, encouraged by the favourable issue of the siege of Samaria, now determined on another effort to win it back. Allying himself with his nephew—Athaliah's son—Ahaziah, king of Judah—as his father had done with Jehoshaphat, the two, with their joint forces, marched across the Jordan and wrested the town from Syria;[4] holding it henceforth in spite of all the efforts of Hazael to reconquer it. Joram, however, narrowly escaped the fate of Ahab, for he was so severely wounded by a Syrian arrow during the fight, that he had to leave the fortress in the hands of Jehu, an old officer of his father, and return to his palace at Jezreel, to be healed.[5]

Meanwhile it had fared ill with the ancient faith, both in Israel and Judah. Passive under the strong and untamed will of the queen-mother Jezebel, Joram, though not himself

[1] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 54.
[2] Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 164.
[3] Jos., *Ant.*, VIII. xv. 3.
[4] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.
[5] 2 Kings viii. 28; ix. 15. 2 Chron. xxii. 6.

an idolater, had, like his father Ahab, allowed her to favour and promote the heathenism she loved. The huge Baal temple, built by Ahab[1] in Samaria, with its staff of 450 black-robed priests, was maintained with great splendour. That of Asherah, at Jezreel, with 400 priests, still polluted the land by its rites and worship. The vast courts of the Samaritan Baal-temple were thronged with worshippers at the high festivals of the god. Phœnician idolatry was becoming an Israelitish institution. Sacred pillars like obelisks[2] and images of the god glittered on all sides; that of Baal himself shining out from the darkness of the inner holy of holies—half fortress, half sanctuary—in which it rose, awfully, aloft. Fifty years had passed since the introduction of heathenism, yet the open worshippers of Baal were still so few, outside the court party in Samaria, that all found in the whole kingdom, could assemble at one time in the temple area.[3] Indifference, however, had spread far and wide; immorality was sapping the national character, and the future ruin of Jehovah worship seemed assured, if things continued as they were.

In Judah the baleful influence of Jezebel was no less threatening; Athaliah, her daughter, repeating there the part her mother was playing in Israel. Wholly under her spell, her husband, Jehoram, had allowed Baal worship to be set up, in its most repulsive features, in Jerusalem itself. After his death, their one surviving son, Jehoahaz or Ahaziah, was only king in name. In reality, Athaliah reigned. A temple to Baal had already been built by her family, in part from the stones of the temple of Jehovah, which had been defaced to construct it; and the sacred vessels had been

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 32. [2] "Baal," in Herzog.
[3] 2 Kings x. 21.

taken for the service of the idol.[1] It had its altars, images, and staff of clergy, under a chief—Mattan—the only priest of Baal whose name has survived.[2] A heathen camarilla was supreme alike in Jerusalem and Samaria. The moral and political cancer of heathenism had invaded the last sanctuary of Jehovah worship. Israel had long been tainted; Judah was now in peril. The national faith was in danger of being driven from the land.

In such a crisis the prophets, in all emergencies the faithful Swiss Guard of the true religion, at last felt it imperative to break, finally and for ever, with the house of Ahab. The mass of the people were still more or less loyal to the past, and they were profoundly discontented. The long protest of Elijah and Elisha had spread silently through the land, and had undermined the authority of the reigning house. That a woman like Jezebel, a foreigner and a heathen—should have held the sway in Israel for two reigns —lording it over the Church as well as the State, at the caprice of her imperious will, had become intolerable. Only a spark was needed to kindle a universal revolt. To the prophets especially, and among them to Elisha, their head, the extremest measures that promised to save the country were not only justifiable, but a duty. All was at stake. Religion and even the nation itself, it seemed, must perish if the family of Ahab continued to reign. But the revolution thus believed to be unavoidable, required a first impulse. And now, as in other similar cases, this came from the prophets, acting through Elisha as their head. Even to him, however, it did not appear enough to use only moral influence. The spirit of Elijah had risen within him. The sternness of his master pointed out what appeared to be the

[1] 2 Chron. xxiv. 4, 7.

[2] 2 Kins xi. 18.

true course; the bringing about a violent solution of the crisis. He resolved to secure, at once, the execution of a long-impending judgment on the house of Ahab for its crimes, and through its destruction to make a fierce stroke for the preservation of the religious and national interests of the land.

CHAPTER VI.

THE REACTION AGAINST HEATHENISM.

(For contemporary monarchs, see table before preceding chapter.)

JOEL (*prophet*).

THE army at Ramoth Gilead had been left by Joram under the command of his chief officer, Jehu[1]—"Jehovah is He"—a veteran who in his youth had been in the body-guard of Ahab, and high in his favour. Since then, his long service and apparent fidelity had secured him the confidence of Ahaziah and Joram. Under a smooth exterior, however, had his master known it, there lay hidden the most dangerous qualities. Apparently no more than a fiery and resolute soldier, he was a true Hebrew in his dissimulation and subtlety. He had ridden in the chariot behind Ahab, with his comrade Bidkar or Bar Dakar, on that fatal journey from Samaria to Jezreel, when Elijah suddenly encountered the king and denounced the murder of Naboth and his sons, and he had heard the portentous curse on Ahab and his house. The scene and the sentence of wrath could never be forgotten, and perhaps raised ambitious thoughts, cherished ever after in his heart. Elijah's bearing, moreover, may have shewn that he expected him to be the instrument of vengeance. In any case, he had long brooded over the prophet's words. Yet he had borne himself so that his rise had been steady, till he was next in rank to the

[1] 2 Kings ix. 25.

royal family, as commander of the host. Elijah had been directed at Horeb to anoint him future king of Israel, but for some unknown reason the commission had remained unfulfilled. He was now, apparently, about forty, but retained all the energy of youth; a man of high consideration among his fellows; accustomed to command and to be obeyed. His reckless impetuosity shewed itself in his furious riding and driving, by which he was known through the army. But while capable of the swiftest and sternest action, he could employ for his ends, when it suited, the darkest treachery; the union of these opposite qualities constituting indeed his special characteristic. Long ready for treason, he only waited an opportunity and a hint from the prophets, whose support and authority with the people he needed, and the race of Ahab was lost.

No more suitable instrument of a great political revolution could have been found; none fitter to destroy Baal worship and avenge the martyrs of Ahab and Jezebel's reign. Without a trace of personal religion, he could assume a holy zeal as the champion of Jehovah, and no tenderness or fear would hinder it going all needed lengths.

Some weeks after Joram's retirement, wounded, to Jezreel, a young prophet, said by tradition to have been the future prophet Jonah, the son of the widow of Sarepta, sent by Elisha, suddenly appeared in Ramoth Gilead, his mantle girt up round him under his girdle, as with runners or men in great haste. Making his way to the house where Jehu was sitting in council with his chief officers, he called him apart, and took him from chamber to chamber into the innermost room of the house, where he was absolutely alone. Producing a small horn of sacred oil,[1] he poured

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 1.

it upon Jehu's head, telling him that God had anointed him king, with the express commission to cut off "the whole house of Ahab" as that of Jeroboam and that of Baasha had perished.[1] This done, the visitor left the house and disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

Such an interruption, by such a personage, had raised the wonder of the assembled officers. What had the mad fellow said? For, to rough soldiers a prophet was a subject of mingled ridicule and superstitious fear. Evading an answer for the moment, Jehu was bluntly told that he lied; so rude were the manners of the camp.[2] The next instant he disclosed the communication he had received. It was enough. The hollowness of Joram's position shewed itself at once. All who heard were ready to revolt, and the words of Jehu kindled the smouldering disaffection to a flame. The discontent of the nation with the existing government had spread even to the highest ranks of the army, and only a signal was needed to inaugurate a revolution. In a moment loud shouts of loyalty to Jehu as king rose from all present. Throwing their great square military cloaks[3] on the ground as an extemporized carpet of state, they conducted him to the top of the stairs leading to the flat roof, and seating him there as on a throne—with the sky for background—blew wild flourishes on their trumpets, and proclaimed him king; the whole army presently joining the cry. Revolution was chronic in the northern kingdom, and the interval since the last was a long one. Jeroboam's House had been dethroned after a reign of twenty-two years: that of Baasha after holding power twenty-four years: then four years of civil war and revolution had followed, and now the House of

[1] 2 Kings ix. 1–10.

[2] One is reminded of the language of the heroes of the *Iliad* to each other.

[3] The "beged," from "bagad," to cover.

Omri had ruled forty years. It was time for a change! All these wild tempests of war, murder, and change, strange to say, had like this one been brought about by some prophet's instigation.

It was necessary, however, that no time should be lost, and that news of the movement should, meanwhile, be kept from reaching Joram. Strict orders were therefore given that no one should leave the city. Mounting his chariot with his old comrade Bidkar, and taking with him a detachment of troops, Jehu set off, armed with his bow and quiver, at the wildest speed, towards Jezreel, turning back every one he overtook on the road. It was a long ride of more than fifty miles, but he pressed on at furious haste. Ramoth was built on the crest of a hill 2,700 feet above the sea.[1] Thence Jehu's party rushed northwards, past Jebel Oscha, 3,400 feet high, towards the deep gorge of the Jabbok; thence, still to the north, past Jabesh Gilead, looking down from its hills; then, on to the hill where stood Pella, in later times. Rounding this, the track bent due east to the sunken bed of the Jordan, which was forded opposite Bethshean. Thence the steep wady El Djalud, with Gideon's Spring of Trembling, flowing from ledge to ledge down its centre, led them straight up to Esdraelon and Jezreel. Sentinels on the watch-tower crowning the town hill, close to the palace, noticed, five or six miles off, a cloud of dust[2] in the east; the sign that chariots approached. Forthwith a rider was sent out to learn their message. He was instantly ordered to fall behind and follow. A second was similarly detained. At last Joram, learning that the furious driving marked the cavalcade as attending Jehu, and suspecting

[1] Kiepert's Map.

[2] 2 Kings ix. 17, Septuagint. Jehu could be seen five or six miles off.

no treachery, ordered his own chariot and rode out to meet him, accompanied by King Ahaziah of Judah, then at Jezreel to sympathize with his wounded uncle. They expected stirring news from Ramoth, and were eager to hear it. Had Hazael made peace? shouted Joram as he came near. "Peace!" cried Jehu, with an ominous turn of the word; "what peace can there be as long as Jezebel acts so wickedly as she does?" Joram, thus treated as a mere passive tool, and keenly aware of the queen mother's unpopularity, felt in a moment that all was lost. The hatred of the people, so long pent up, had at last broken out. Muttering the words, "Treachery, Ahaziah," he turned the chariot and hastily fled. But an arrow from Jehu pierced him through and through[1] next moment, and he fell out of his chariot dying, close to the very field of Naboth in which Elijah had said that the crime of Ahab would be avenged. To stop and cast the body into Naboth's ground, that the words of the prophet might be literally fulfilled, detained Jehu a moment, and gave Ahaziah a passing advantage. Fleeing straight south towards Jerusalem, he had crossed Esdraelon and reached the "hollow," or "rough ascent," near Engannim—the Fountain of the Gardens[2]—an opening in the hills, still the one highway for all travel north and south, he rushed up the stony pass to Ibleam, the present Belame, on the hills of Samaria, before he was overtaken. There, however, an arrow mortally wounded him, but he managed to drive on to the fortified town Megiddo, not far off, where he died.[3] Thence, his attendants were able to carry

[1] 2 Kings ix. 24.

[2] *Dict. of the Bible*, art. "Gur."

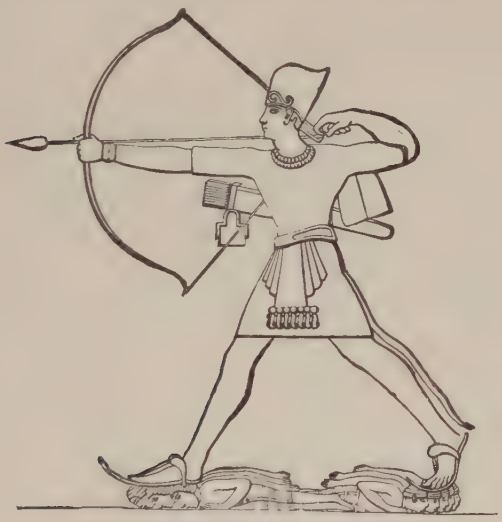
[3] It is said in 2 Chron. xxii. 9, that he was hidden in Samaria and caught there and slain. "And when they had slain him they buried him." In 2 Kings ix. 27, he is said to have died at Megiddo and to have been taken thence to Jerusalem and buried in the royal tombs. There is, apparently, some corruption of the text.

the body to Jerusalem; Jehu being too busy to hinder them.

Jezebel, now a woman approaching sixty, had seen her son's murder from her palace windows, on the line of the town wall, overlooking the plain. But her spirit was as haughty and imperious as ever; for, with all her faults, she at least knew no fear. Ordering her maids to paint her eyelids with lead ore, to make them look larger and brighter; perhaps painting her face as the Jewish women in Dughestan still do, adding to their attractions by broad bands of yellow and red across them; and putting on a head-dress—perhaps to shew that she was unmoved at the prospect of death, but possibly in the thought that Jehu might fancy it would strengthen his position to take her nominally into his harem, as kings took over the wives of their predecessors—she placed herself in the high latticed window of the palace tower,[1] and awaited his approach. She knew her fate hung on a thread, for who did not hate her?—but she hastened it by a taunt. "What came of Zimri, who murdered his master as thou hast done?" was her haughty greeting to Jehu.[2] "Are any of you on my side?" shouted he, in reply, halting as he rode up. Two or three eunuchs, looking out from behind her, answered the summons, for even in the palace she had no friends. "Then throw her down," cried Jehu, and a moment after she lay broken and mangled on the ground, at his feet; her blood splashing up, on the walls and on his horses. Another instant, and the wheels of his chariot crashed over her, that he might say he had trampled her under foot.[3] He could now rest for a time. Driving into the palace as its master, he ordered refreshment after his

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. vi. 4.
[2] This seems the meaning, 2 Kings ix. 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, ver. 33.

long and wearisome journey. The first act in the tragedy was over. Cheered by food and drink, he could even be generous. "Let them go out and bury the cursed woman, for after all she is a king's daughter." But the lean, yellow, long-snouted, half wild town dogs which swarm in all Eastern cities had anticipated interference.[1] Nothing was left of



TREADING THE CONQUERED UNDER FOOT.
From inscriptions in the Wady Sheikh.

her but the skull, the feet, and the palms of the hands. Elijah's words had come true.

Jehu had founded a dynasty that was to last 114 years; twice as long as any in Israel before it. But there was still much, in his opinion, to be done. Half measures did not please him. He would root out all connected with Ahab,

[1] Bruce saw the town dogs in Abyssinia eating the bodies of state criminals just killed.

with a relentless sternness hitherto unequalled in the history of the monarchy. Samaria was not as yet in his power. No fewer than seventy sons of Ahab's vast polygamous family—some of them doubtless children[1]—lived there, in charge of the leading men. One of these might strike for his father's throne. Writing a letter to their guardians, Jehu, knowing his power, sent them a defiance. As they had control of the capital, with its magazines of arms and strong defences, he told them, with bitter irony, they might perhaps wish to set up a rival to him. A submissive answer being returned, he threw off disguise. "Let them, if they were loyal, send the heads of the whole seventy at once to Jezreel." This was presently done, and he could now feel secure. The dynasty of Omri, after reigning about forty years, had been exterminated. Two rows of heads piled up at the gate of the palace attested the fact. But even this massacre was not enough. All the courtiers of the late king and of his father, and all connected with them, even to the palace priests, were killed.[2]

Now at last Jehu could enter Samaria, but his journey thither was stained with more blood. Forty-two of Joram's sons or nephews[3] had set out from Jerusalem to visit him; and were as yet ignorant of his fate or that of their own king. They had reached the "Shearing House," a now unknown spot, between Jezreel and Samaria, frequented by shepherds. It was on Jehu's way, and they were instantly arrested and put to death on his arrival; their bodies being thrown into the huge rain-water cistern of the village, as

[1] 2 Kings x. 1.

[2] Graetz thinks that 2 Kings x. 11, refers to those by whom Ahab's sons had been murdered. Jehu, he fancies, treats them as criminals for the act which he had demanded. He could thus better screen himself from such an increase of guilt.

[3] 2 Kings x. 12-14. 2 Chron. xxii. 8.

those of English women were cast, during the Indian Mutiny, into the well of Cawnpore.

Riding on, Jehu encountered one in whose fierce but honest zeal for Jehovah worship he justly reckoned on finding hearty support. It was Jonadab, son of Rechab the "Rider,"[1] whom the influence of Elijah had led to found a new austere sect of Arab-like Nazarites, famous in those days as zealots for the pure worship of Jehovah.[2] Withdrawing from the communities of men to the tent life of the wilderness pastures, he protested, by his doing so, against the corruptions of the times, while the moving life of the tent prevented the cultivation of the grape, and thus secured escape from the drunkenness so prevalent in those days in northern Israel. Invited into Jehu's chariot, he eagerly joined him, and the two rode together into Samaria, doubtless planning to annihilate Baal worship in Israel. To Jonadab, all who had joined in it were an abomination. He was ready to cut them off, root and branch.

Hitherto nothing had passed to mark Jehu as opposed to the Phœnician idolatry. He might secretly be disposed to favour or at least to tolerate it. The heathen priests of the palace had fallen because connected with the ruined dynasty. Profound dissimulation and intrepid daring equally characterized the new king, for, amidst all this apparent indifference, he had determined to extinguish Baal worship in blood. Jonadab and he now matured their plans to do so. A great festival of the god was proclaimed; Ahab had served him a little, but Jehu would serve him much. All his followers through the whole land were commanded, on pain of death, to appear, dressed in the special garment worn at a high feast of the idol. On the fixed day a vast

[1] See page 66. [2] *Ibid.*

assembly gathered in the grounds of the great Baal temple in Samaria. The usual cry was raised, that no one but a votary of the god was to be present to see the holy mysteries. Jehu, as if the foremost among these, and most devoted, stood, accompanied by Jonadab, at the great altar in the vast open court before the temple, and offered burnt sacrifice to the idol; no symptom of the treachery he designed shewing itself on his unmoved features. But he had placed armed men at the gates; some to enter at his order, while others were to remain outside, to prevent escape. The sacrifice ended, the mask was dropped. At a given signal the whole gay multitude were mercilessly cut down. The hideous massacre over, the image of Baal was dragged from the inner fortress-like sanctuary in which it towered aloft, and, with all the symbols and statues of the other deities around,[1] was thrown down and broken to pieces. The temple itself was then razed to the ground, and its site contemptuously turned into a depository of the filth of the town. Baal worship was, for the time, rooted out from Israel, though, strange to say, the Asherah in Samaria escaped the general destruction,[2] for it was still standing in the next reign. Jehovah worship was once more triumphantly established as the national faith, but under the symbols of the golden calves of Bethel and Dan. Yet Jehu was moved by policy only, not by high religious principles.

The death of King Ahaziah was the signal for an equally startling revolution in Judah. He had been the youngest son of Jehoram, for the Arabs in their invasion a few years before, probably as the hired allies of the Philistines, having captured the royal harem and all the king's sons but one, had spared the former and killed the latter. Ahaziah, then

[1] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 572. [2] 2 Kings xiii. 6.

known as Jehoahaz, was the only survivor.[1] Controlled by his mother,[2] Athaliah, Baal worship had been vigorously maintained by her in Jerusalem during his reign, though there does not seem to have been a forcible suspension of the worship of Jehovah, or any formal persecution of His servants. He had been king only a year, when murdered by Jehu, at the early age of twenty or twenty-two.[3]

The vast families of the past reigns—children of many different mothers—had now been almost extirpated by family feuds; by the massacre of so many princes by the Arabs; and by the fierce bloodthirstiness of Jehu.[4] Ahaziah, however, had left sons, for Eastern kings marry when almost boys, and there were still a number of personages more or less nearly connected with the throne. But all his children were too young to reign,[5] or act alone, and Athaliah found the throne within her reach, if she chose to seize it. Fiercely ambitious and utterly unscrupulous, the opportunity was instantly embraced. Every one, even distantly, of the race of David was forthwith slain. Pity might have moved her to spare her grandchildren, but she had no heart. To prevent their future rivalry they were remorselessly murdered,[6] one baby, only, of about two months old—the future Jehoash—escaping. Hurrying him and his nurse into a secret chamber in the priests' quarter of the temple, his aunt Jehoshabeath,[7] the daughter of Jehoram, and wife of the high

[1] 2 Chron. xxi. 17. [2] 2 Chron. xxii. 3.

[3] For forty-two, 2 Chron. xxii. 2, read twenty-two. Ewald. Thenius. Keil. The Septuagint has twenty.

[4] 2 Kings x. 11.

[5] In 2 Chron. xxii. 9, for, "So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom," read, "And the house of Ahaziah had none who were able for the kingdom."

[6] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 617.

[7] 2 Chron. xxii. 11. Called Jehosheba, 2 Kings xi. 2. She was Ahaziah's sister, but the daughter of another mother than Athaliah.

priest Jehoiada, was able to preserve him and his faithful attendant. The line of David had at last only a feeble infant as its representative, but he was carefully guarded in the safe shelter of the sacred precincts. Meanwhile Athaliah gave herself up with the fanatical zeal of her mother, to establish Baal worship in city and country. The temple might remain in the hands of the national party. Her thoughts were elsewhere. For the first time, a queen sat on the Jewish throne, for women had not yet sunk in the East to the insignificance to which Mohammedanism has consigned them.

Jehoiada, the high priest, had held his high dignity apparently from the later years of King Jehoshaphat. He was already an old man, though it is hard to fix his exact age.[1] A relic of better times, he retained their spirit amidst the spreading degeneracy of the later reigns. Loyal to Jehovah and the House of David, he devoted himself to the restoration of the ancient faith and of the royal cause. Biding his time, he steadily prepared for a revolution. To oppose Athaliah in the first flush of her usurpation was hopeless, but it became easier as disaffection increased, through her foreign practices and tastes. To have Phœnician favourites at court; to see Baal worship rampant in the holy city; to feel that the city of David, and what was left of his kingdom, were being lowered to a mere Tyrian province, roused general indignation. At last, in the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, things were ripe for change. Jehoiada had already won over the officers of the queen's bodyguard, and her "runners," five in number,[2] and having brought them

[1] Lord A. Hervey, art. "Jehoiada," *Dict. of Bible.*

[2] 2 Kings xi. 4. The bodyguard are called "Carians" by Ewald and Graetz. If they be right, then adventurers had come from the south-west province of Asia Minor. How little we know of the movements of tribes and nations in those remote ages!

to the temple, and sworn them, by a solemn oath, to fidelity, shewed them the young king, now a child of about seven. His next step was to send them through the country to invite the priests, Levites, and local elders or "chiefs of the fathers," to Jerusalem—probably on one of the three great annual feasts, when their assembling would not attract attention. These also, having been sworn with due care and secrecy, to stand by the young prince, were permitted to see him,[1] and took the oath of fidelity. It only remained to bring matters to a crisis. Arrangements were made to hold the different gates of the temple with a strong force, and to occupy the priests' court in the same way; the space before it being left for others friendly to the revolution. To secure the requisite number of guards, the out-going courses of Levites were not dismissed as usual, but joined with those who should have taken their places.[2] Spears and small and large shields, which had belonged to David's guards, and had been laid up in the temple for 150 years, as well-nigh sacred, were brought out and put in the hands of the officers; if only to remind them that it was for David's heir they were contending. The other guards had weapons of their own. The day chosen was the Sabbath, when crowds would gather in the temple.[3] When this had arrived, and the people filled the wide courts, the young king was brought out to a central platform,[4] raised between the former site of the brazen altar and the temple, and flanked by lines of armed men. Jehoiada now placed the crown on his head; and after doing so,[5] laid gently on it a roll of the Law.[6] In after years the act would remind him that he was bound to rule according

[1] 2 Chron. xxiii. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, ver. 8. [3] *Ibid.*
[4] Graetz calls it a "pillar-like seat." *Geschichte*, vol. ii. p. 54.
[5] Bertheau. Thenius.
[6] Testimony (2 Kings xi. 12; 2 Chron. xxiii. 11) = "law."

to its directions, and even to write out a copy, and read it daily.[1] This done, there came the solemn anointing and homage. The rod of Jesse had once more blossomed; there was again a king of the root of David. Loud cries of "God bless the king!" rent the air, amidst wild clapping of hands, and tumultuous exultation. Athaliah, hitherto ignorant of what was afoot, now first learned her danger. But she had all her mother's bravery. Commanding her litter to be brought, she instantly came in person to the temple. There the scene might have appalled even so stout a heart. The young king stood, crowned, on the platform, surrounded by the chief men. Choirs of Levites were chanting a coronation psalm; the temple band was playing; trumpeters ever and anon pealed out loud flourishes, and the multitude in and beyond the courts were hailing the king with wild acclamations.[2] Rending her clothes in her rage, she could only scream out, "Treason, treason," and wait to see if any would rally to her side. But Jehoiada soon decided her fate. "Lead her outside the sacred bounds, between your ranks," cried he to the guards, "and kill her when she is on common ground." Forthwith the crowd opened, and the doomed queen was hurried on[3] till she reached the chariot gate of the palace, and there she was slain.

The overthrow of Baal worship followed. The temple of the Sun-god, built, apparently, close to that of Jehovah, was at once demolished; its altars and images destroyed. Mattan, its high priest, was cut down as he stood before one of the former.[4] Unlike the reformation of Jehu, however,

[1] Deut. xvii. 18-20. That this incident is mentioned in both Kings and Chronicles proves that the law was in existence at least as early as the time of Jehoiada, a fact that bears hard on the theory of its being of no earlier date than the Exile.

[2] 2 Chron. xxiii. 18, for "such as laughed to sing," read "leading the chant of."

[3] 2 Kings xi. 15.

[4] 2 Kings xi. 18.

[illegible] was no further [illegible]. No portions of Athaliah's [illegible] were added to the city or kingdom. Jerusalem could not have been more gentile or more popular. Both Israel and Judah were at last free from the presence of heathenism.

Jehoash now strove to restore Jehovah worship to its former glory. The vessels of silver and [illegible] were re-appointed on the footing established by David,[1] and the services of the temple re-established. But the general feeling prevented the high places served to Jehovah throughout the land from being destroyed, notwithstanding the command in the law that sacrifice and incense should be offered only in the temple.[2] Even if, however, [illegible] were permitted to furnish materials for the house of God, but measures were now taken to repair it. These unfortunately, were not carried out; for after twenty-three years[3] it still lay in partial ruins. The priests had been instructed to devote to the restoration the money received in payment of vows, or as 'free gifts,' but nothing had been done. Vexed Jehoash had been allowed by the arrangement [illegible] while other priests [illegible] the people had no satisfactory proof that the money given was laid out as they wished, and [illegible] fell off. Above all, there was no healing spirit to induce life and zeal into the priesthood at large. They had been ordered to collect the special tax of half a shekel a head, appointed to be paid for the Tabernacle,[4] but they put off the task. Another arrangement was

[1] [illegible] xxiii. 19.

[2] [illegible] xii. 3, 4. It is almost [illegible] that the fact of the temple standing for more than two centuries [illegible] Solomon, and [illegible] never been [illegible] without [illegible] a [illegible] date. [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

consequently made. Depriving them of all control of the funds, Jehoiada himself,[1] and the king's scribe, undertook to check the temple receipts, for which a chest, provided with a slit to allow coin to enter, was placed near the altar. The "trespass money" and "sin money"—that is, the gifts made by those who offered the sacrifices required for special offences—alone were left to the priests.[2] A proclamation calling on all to pay the temple tax which the Levites had neglected to gather, resulted in its being brought to Jerusalem. Honest superintendents[3] paid the workmen directly; energy was infused into the undertaking, and the restoration was rapidly accomplished.[4] Other measures were taken to provide the gold and silver needed for the service, and, after a long delay, the people saw the sanctuary once more in its full glory.[5]

Meanwhile the small heathen party, though crushed for the time, kept together; but it could do nothing so long as Jehoiada lived. An organized temple guard appointed by him protected the sacred building from surprise or injury.[6] At his death, however, things altered greatly. Honoured by a grand funeral, and a burial in the city of David, among the kings whose race he had served so well, the influence he had exercised on Jehoash passed away with his life. The "princes,"[7] that is, the head sheiks, of Judah, the heads of the courtly families, had supported Athaliah in her devotion to Baal worship. The rich and powerful Phœnicia was to the upper Hebrew classes of that day what Nor-

[1] By his officer. 2 Chron. xxiv. 11. [2] 2 Kings xii. 16. Num. v. 8; xviii. 8, 9.
[3] Levites. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 11.
[4] 2 Kings xii. 15. See on the whole history, 2 Chron. xxiv. 4-14.
[5] 2 Kings xxii. 4-7. 2 Chron. xxiv. 13, 14.
[6] 2 Kings xi. 18. Jer. xxix. 26.
[7] Translated elsewhere in Chronicles, "captains," "chiefs," "rulers," "governors," "generals," "stewards."

mandy was to the court of the Confessor, or Paris, under Louis Quatorze, to the later Stuarts. The worship of Jehovah might do for the common people; that of Baal was the only one fit for the upper classes. While Jehoiada lived, they had stood aloof. At his death, however, they once more raised their heads, and, having given in their adhesion to Jehoash, were restored to their old influence and authority. Their return to favour was fatal to Jehoiada's reformation. Heathenism once more enjoyed the support of the crown. It had at first shewn itself under Solomon; Athaliah had reintroduced it; under Jehoash it was revived as that of the fashionable world, whom Athaliah's influence had brought to ape foreign manners. Asherahs and images of Baal reappeared, but the mass of the people as yet remained true to the national faith, and the priesthood, who had crowded from Israel to the southern kingdom in Jeroboam's reign, were loyal to it. Prophets also denounced the apostasy, and among them one who might well have commanded the respect of the king—Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, now high priest in his stead. He had grown up with Jehoash from childhood, and was connected with him by blood,[1] besides being the son of him to whom the king had owed his throne and his life. Standing in his place at the great altar, with the crowd of worshippers looking up from the lower courts, he earnestly condemned the heathenism of the crown and court. Furious at such a public rebuke, Jehoash had the baseness to order him to be killed where he stood, and this was at once done; the nobles, or some of the people, stoning him to death on the spot, perhaps with fragments left from the repairs of the temple. Such a deed in such a place produced a deep and abiding

[1] He was the king's cousin.

impression. Even in the days of Christ it was remembered with horror how he fell in the very court of the priests, between the temple building and the great altar,[1] and tradition added that the crime was committed on a Sabbath day, which was also the great Day of Atonement, and that nothing could efface or dry up his blood.[2] So soon had the king's gratitude to Jehoiada faded away. But the words of the martyr as he died—"Jehovah look on it and requite it" —were to be terribly fulfilled.

Both Israel and Judah in these years had the danger of a Syrian war constantly threatening them; and, indeed, had only too often to mourn the ruin and slaughter of fierce invasions. Jeroboam, Baasha, Omri, Ahab, and Jehoram,

[1] Matt. xxiii. 35. He is there called the son of Barachias. This name has apparently crept into the text from a marginal gloss which confounded him with Zachariah the prophet, who was the son of Berechiah, or with another Zachariah, who was the son of Jeberechiah. Isa. viii. 2.

[2] R. Jochanan said: Eighty thousand priests were killed for the blood of Zacharias. R. Juda asked R. Achsa, Whereabouts they killed Zacharias, whether in the court of the women or in the court of Israel? He answered: Neither in the court of Israel, nor in the court of the women, but in the court of the priests. And that was not done to his blood which useth to be done to the blood of a ram or of a kid. Concerning these it is written: "And he shall pour out his blood and cover it with dust." They committed seven sins in that day. They killed a priest, a prophet, and a judge; they shed the blood of an innocent man; they polluted the court; and that day was the Sabbath day, and the Day of Expiation. When therefore Nebuzar adan * went up thither he saw the blood bubbling. So he said to them, "What meaneth this?" "It is the blood," said they, "of calves, lambs, and rams which we have offered on the altar." "Bring, then," said he, "calves, lambs, and rams, that I may try whether this be their blood." They brought them and slew them, and that blood still bubbled, but their blood did not bubble. "Discover the matter to me," said he "or I will tear your flesh with iron rakes." Then they said to him, "This was a priest, a prophet, and a judge, who foretold to Israel all these evils which we have suffered from you, and we rose up against him and slew him." "But I," said he, "will appease him." He brought the Rabbis and slew them upon that blood, and yet it was not pacified; he brought the children out of the school and slew them upon it, and yet it was not quiet. So that he slew upon it 94,000, and yet it was not quiet. He drew near to it himself and said: "O Zacharias, Zacharias! thou hast destroyed the best of thy people; would you have me destroy them all?" Then it was quiet and did not bubble any more. *Talmud*, quoted by Lightfoot, on Matt. xxiii. 35.

* The officer appointed over Jerusalem at its capture, by Nebuchadnezzar.

had alike suffered in this way; the kings of Damascus steadily assailing them in the hope of conquering the whole territory of the Ten Tribes. There was peace only when it was for a time required, to gather strength for a fresh attack, or while paralyzed by the fear of Assyria. Syrian wars, in fact, had formed the background of Jewish history from the time of the division and consequent weakening of the nation, after the death of Solomon. Under Jehu, the hereditary enemy was to prove more dangerous than ever, extending his invasions, for the first time, even to Judah.[1] Hazael, the new king of Damascus, proved fierce and able beyond any of his predecessors, the civil war in Assyria after the death of Shalmaneser in B.C. 823, leaving him free to be so. Forced to justify his usurpation by restoring the honour of his kingdom, which had suffered greatly from the inglorious reign of Benhadad II., he threw his whole energies into wars of conquest, and won himself a name worshipped by his countrymen with almost divine honours as late as the Christian era.[2] The weakness and confusion attending the changes of dynasty in Israel had, during long periods, made vigorous defence against foreign enemies impossible. Jeroboam, Baasha, and Omri, had alike been forced to resign more or less territory at the beginning of their reigns, and Jehu, in the same way, in spite of his signal ability, soon after his accession, had to see the whole region east of the Jordan seized and annexed for the time to the kingdom of Damascus, by Hazael, perhaps in alliance with Tyre,[3] the Syrian hating him as a tribute-paying vassal of Assyria, and thus in a special degree his enemy, resisting, as he did, the power of Nineveh The

[1] 2 Kings xii. 27. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23. [2] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. iv. 6.
[3] 2 Kings x. 32, 33.

horrors of this terrible period were long remembered. Children were dashed on the stones, the young men ruthlessly cut down, the matrons butchered with the most appalling cruelty, and many of the men torn to pieces with the iron spikes of threshing sledges.[1] Overpowered for the moment, Jehu appears to have been forced to an ignominious peace, which left his whole kingdom open to the Syrians. By this means, apparently, Hazael was able to carry his ravages as far south as Judah.[2] There, as it would seem, with the aid of Edom and of the Phœnicians, now no longer interested in a Hebrew alliance, he defeated the Jewish army, murdering the prisoners of rank, and carrying off large numbers of the population to slavery in Edom and Tyre, whence many were sold to distant nations.[3] The destruction of the southern kingdom appeared, indeed, so imminent, that Jehoash was glad to buy off the enemy. All the miscellaneous gifts of the temple received since the days of Jehoshaphat were surrendered, with the other temple treasures and those of the palace that could be spared.[4] The land, besides, was plundered. Nor was calamity limited to the miseries of war. Nature itself seemed to have become an enemy. A long drought had burned up the land; the seed rotted under the clods; the threshing floors were bare, the barns fallen down, and everything green had withered away. The cattle moaned in the barren, iron-bound pastures; the flocks wandered about in distress for water; flames of fire seemed to have swept over the land, and the very streams were everywhere dried up.[5]

But still worse was in store. Locusts come only in seasons

[1] 2 Kings viii. 12; x. 32, 33. Amos i. 3, 4.
[2] 2 Kings xii. 18. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.
[3] Joel iii. 6. Amos i. 6–10.
[4] 2 Kings xii. 18.
[5] Joel i. 16–20.

of special drought, and they now appeared in swarm upon swarm. The kingdom seemed doomed.

A contemporary picture of the visitation fortunately survives.[1]

"3. A fire devours before them: behind them glows a flame; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, but behind them is a desolate wilderness! They spare nothing as they pass! 4. Like horses in their shape, they run swift as horsemen; 5. as with the bounding noise of chariots they leap onwards over the crests of the mountains; like crackling fire when it devours the stubble; like the sword of a great army prepared for war. 6. The people tremble before them, all faces grow fiery red with terror! 7. They run like mighty men, they climb walls like men of war, every one marches straight on; no one turns from his path. 8. No one crowds on the other; each keeps his own course. They may fall in heaps, but they keep on their march, unbroken. 9. They swarm through the city; they climb up the walls; they make their way into the houses; they enter at the lattices, like a thief. 10. The earth seems to quake before them, the very heavens seem to tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark, and the stars withdraw their shining."

The purple vine, the green fig-tree, the gray olive, the scarlet pomegranate, the golden corn, the waving palm, the fragrant citron vanished before them, and the trunks and branches were left bare and white by their devouring teeth. God had visited His land in wrath. The great day of His judgments for their sins had come.[2] The drunkard might lament the new wine thus snatched from his lips; the priests sigh over the flour offering and drink offering cut off from the house of Jehovah, for there was neither wine, nor oil, nor flour, and the altar stood black and cold. The husbandmen and vine-dressers might mourn for the wheat and the barley, the vine and the fig-tree, for all the trees of the field were blasted, and joy had withered away from the sons of men.[3]

[1] Joel ii. 3–10. [2] Deut. xxviii. 21 ff. [3] Joel i. 5–15.

The terribleness of a severe visitation by locusts has in our own day received a vivid illustration by British experience in Cyprus, which was so subject to this plague, that special measures were required to meet and stamp it out. In 1880, therefore, it was made compulsory on every male between the ages of eighteen and sixty years, to collect a certain weight of locust eggs to be paid as an annual tax, and the egg-sacks must be delivered clean, without any admixture of earth; so we may form some estimate of how enormous was the diminution of the foe when we learn that the weight of the tiny grain-like eggs destroyed in the autumn of 1880, was actually 236 tons. This, however, was far exceeded in the following year, for notwithstanding this wholesale destruction the remnant that escaped detection and survived to deposit their eggs was so great that no less than 1,330 tons' weight of locusts' eggs were destroyed between July, 1881, and February, 1882. Nevertheless, so great was the multitude of cunningly buried egg-sacks which escaped detection, that, when the hatching season arrived, there was apparently no diminution in the vast swarms of living locusts which presently appeared—hungry hordes threatening immediate famine, and suggesting ever increasing legions for future years.

It was evident that a measure for their wholesale destruction must be organized on a far more extensive scale. The preparations for war included such items as 5,500 canvas screens, each fifty yards in length; tools for digging great trenches; and payment of labourers, who were required to keep watch day and night wherever the presence of the foe was suspected. In the district of Famagusta alone 32,220 pits were dug, and all these were in due time filled with a densely packed mass of struggling locusts, the total weight

of insects thus destroyed in this one district alone being above twelve thousand tons! It might well be supposed that such wholesale massacre would have effectually thinned the locust legions. But again the survivors proved to have been so numerous that the swarms of the following spring were actually as large as those of any previous year, and the official reports stated that they were "still gaining ground." It was evident that yet more vigorous measures were requisite, so the infested area was subdivided into smaller districts, each of which was placed under the closest supervision; 65,000 pits were dug and 8,000 additional screens were prepared and kept in active movement, preceding the march of the foe. It is estimated that the locust slaughter of 1883 must have been somewhere about two hundred thousand millions!

But although the locust crop of 1884 gave good proof of the benefits of this wholesale massacre, there was still good cause for vigilance and unremitting care. To the working material in hand there were added 3,800 zinc traps made on a new system; also 2,860 canvas screens, making of these a total which, if placed in a line, would have made about 315 miles of canvas wall. The island was divided into still smaller districts for official supervision, but the reduction in the number of the foe rendered a corresponding reduction possible in the force employed to cope with them. Only 2,000 persons were therefore employed, of whom 1,400 were labourers, working on contract. By judiciously marching these from one point to another, they were able to do all that was requisite. At one point, however, a serious alarm arose, for the locusts, having suddenly changed their line of march, out-flanked their watchers and had actually reached the standing crops. In this emergency a working party of

soldiers was called out to do battle with this tiny but serious foe. Success has, at last, crowned this struggle, and Cyprus is now free from the scourge.[1]

Locusts, while still young and without wings, at times, in Palestine, cover the ground for a mile in length, and twenty, thirty, or even fifty yards across. When they approach a village in their steady and constant advance, the people turn out, light fires round their fields, dig trenches and fill them with water, and try to beat the swarming thousands back with their cloaks and branches of trees, but in spite of all they swarm up the trees and strip them of every green leaf, and crunch up every blade in the gardens on their line of march. Such was the state of things which Joel chronicles.

But the prophet was still a great power in the land, and one appeared in this terrible hour of her visitation by this great calamity. Joel, a priest of Jerusalem, seized with prophetic spirit, came forward, demanding that a solemn fast should be held. All must attend—the elders, the children, the very babes, the bridegroom from his chamber and the bride from her closet.[2] Nor was there any hesitation. The harsh blast of the sacred horns proclaimed the assembly. The whole population approached and cast themselves on the earth with wailing supplications, in front of the altar. The priests gathered in their multitude in their own court, the space between the front, or porch of the temple, and the fireless altar,[3] and lay with their faces on the ground, in black sackcloth, instead of their usual white

[1] Miss Gordon Cumming, *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 12, 1885.

[2] Joel ii. 16.

[3] The porch was a structure as broad as the temple, and half the depth. The altar, which was of brass, ran along the whole front of the temple, for it was as broad and stood out as far, and was square. 2 Chron. iii. 4; viii. 12; iv. 1. There was an open space between the porch or portico and the altar; these forming its front and back. This was the court of the priests, across which they had to go to enter the temple.

robes.[1] No music of psalms or instruments rose, but in its place only the piercing cries and laments of people and priests alike. The very altar was covered with sackcloth.[2] The people as they lay prostrate cast ashes on their heads with ceaseless cries of sorrow. The priests, spreading their black mantles[3] before the doors of the temple, as if to shew its Invisible Lord the depth of their grief, shrieked aloud, "Spare Thy people, O Lord; give not Thine heritage to reproach, lest the heathen make us a byword, and ask, Where is their God?"[4]

This strange day of humiliation appeared to be blessed. A rich fall of rain came soon after;[5] a full harvest might at last be hoped for, and the favour of God seemed returning to the refreshed land and its people. With such indications of better days, the tone of the prophet in a second address, forming the latter half of the book which bears his name, changed from gloomy foreboding to the brightest anticipations. The locusts had come from the coast; the van of their huge army was east of Jerusalem; their centre covered Judah; their rear extended towards the "Great Sea." But, mighty as this host had been, Jehovah was mightier. They might see it even now! Let the sadness be put away! The locusts would presently disappear, driven off by strong winds into the wilderness, the Dead Sea, and the Mediterranean; the very air of the wilderness reeking with the stench of their bodies.

"21. Fear not, O land," he goes on to say,[6] "rejoice and be glad, for Jehovah has done great things! 22. Fear no longer, ye beasts of the field, for the pastures are growing green again; the tree bears its fruit; the fig and the vine yield their strength! 23. Be glad, then, ye sons of Zion, and rejoice in Jehovah, your God. He has given you

[1] Joel i. 13. [2] Judging from Judith iv. 11.
[3] Fritzsche, on Judith iv. 11. [4] Joel ii. 17. [5] Joel ii. 22. [6] Joel ii. 21, ff

the autumn rain in full measure. He has poured down upon you the heavy winter rain, the early rain and the latter rain;[1] thus giving you in fulness what is needed for a rich harvest. 24. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat; the vats in which you press out the wine and oil shall overflow with both, 25. for I, Jehovah, will make up to you all that the locusts, in all the names by which you know them—the arbeh, the jelek, the hasil, the gazam—my great destroying army, which I sent among you, devoured. 26. Then," he continues, in the name of God Himself, "you shall always have plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of Jehovah, your God, who has dealt so wondrously with you, and My people will never again be put to shame. 27. I shall return to you, and ye shall know by the blessings you enjoy that I am once more in your midst, and that I Jehovah, and none else, am your God. Nor will you, My people, ever again be put to shame.

"28. Nor will temporal good be the only result of the nation turning to Me with its whole heart. When it does so, there will not be a few prophets, as now; the whole community will be filled with My Spirit. The old will have dreams by night; the young men, visions in clear day; 29. on your very slave men and slave women, now so despised, will I pour out My Spirit.

"30. But while it will be thus with those who fear Me, a fearful day of wrath is in store for my enemies, the great and terrible day of Jehovah![2] That day shall come with fearful signs in heaven and on earth; appearances as of blood and fire in the air; pillars of smoke like those from volcanoes; 31. a darkening of the sun and blood-like redness in the moon.[3] 32. In that day whosoever shall call on the

[1] *Geshem, Moreh, Malkush.* The three names for the rains needed for a good harvest.

[2] Joel ii. 30.

[3] The imagery is perhaps taken from the smoke and flames of war. This passage, and also Isa. xiii. 10; Matt. xxiv. 29; Mark xiii. 24, are thought by some to involve allusion to the mysterious awe with which eclipses were viewed by the Hebrews, in common with other nations of antiquity. The language reminds us of the signs recorded by Josephus as attending the fall of Jerusalem. "A star stood like a sword over the city; and, when the people were assembled at the Passover at the ninth hour * of the night, a light shone so strongly round the altar and the temple, that it seemed bright day, for half an hour. The eastern door of the temple, which twenty men scarcely could shut each evening, held with iron-bound bars, and very deep bolts, let into the threshold, which was one solid stone, was seen at the sixth hour † of the night to open of its own accord. Chariots and armed troops were seen through the whole country, coursing through the clouds, round the cities. At the feast of Pentecost, moreover, the priests, entering the temple by night, as was their wont, for

* About three in the morning. † About midnight.

name of Jehovah shall be saved, for Jerusalem and its temple shall be a refuge for all them that escape, as Jehovah has said, and among the fugitives thus saved shall be all whom Jehovah shall call.

"III. 1. Hitherto,"[1] continues the human echo of the Divine voice, "Judah has been invaded, its sons and daughters carried off, and sold as slaves to distant lands, and much innocent blood shed. All this cries for punishment. My people thus led into captivity from Judah and Jerusalem must be brought back. 2. To do this I shall gather against them all the nations that oppressed them, in the valley of Jehoshaphat. But its name—'the place where Jehovah judges,' will speak of a greater triumph—the judgment of God over His enemies! For I will contend with them there, for My people and My heritage Israel; My people whom they have scattered; My land which they have parted among them. 3. They cast lots for My people; they exchanged a boy for a harlot; they sold a girl for a cup of wine! 4. Do you think, O Tyre and Sidon, and coasts of Philistia, to contend against Me, Jehovah? Will you avenge on Me what you fancy your wrongs, suffered by the victories of My people over you in the past? Will you try to do aught against Me? Right speedily will I return your folly on your own heads! 5. You have carried off My silver and My gold from My House;[2] you have stored up in your heathen temples My best and most prized treasures; 6. you have sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the sons of Greece,[3] to take them far from their country!

"7. Behold, I will bring them back from the place to which you have sold them, and return your crime on your own heads by giving your sons and daughters in their stead, as slaves into the hands of the

worship, first perceived a great movement and sound, and then heard a multitudinous voice, 'Let us depart hence.'" Jos., *De Bell. Jud.*, VI. x. 3. Euseb., *H. E.*, iii. 8. A comet was also seen for a whole year.

[1] Joel iii. 1, ff.

[2] 2 Kings xii. 18.

[3] Hebrew, Sons of the Javanites. The Philistines carried off the people, and the Phœnicians bought them. The Tyrian slave-dealers followed all armies to buy the prisoners. They hung like a cloud of vultures in the rear of Alexander's march, as far as the Indus. *Arr. Exped.*, vi. 22, 8. They attended Nicanor's advance in the same way, 1,000 of them assembling at the camp of Gorgias, "with silver and gold very much, to buy the children of Israel as slaves," and with chains to bind them. Jos., *Ant.*, XII. vii. 3. They gathered also in the rear of the Roman armies in great numbers. *Hieron.*, on Ezek. xxvii. 16. Children would not pay for transport and were abandoned to perish. The demand in Greece for slaves was enormous; 10,000 were bought and sold in one day at the slave market of Delos; and Athens, Egina, and Corinth, in the day of their prosperity, had, between them, 1,330,000 slaves. See authorities in Pusey.

sons of Judah, who will sell them to the Sabeans of Sheba, in Arabia, a people far off! I, Jehovah, have spoken it!"

Roused by this anticipation, the prophet seems to feel the battle already at hand, and animates his countrymen to the struggle.

"9. Dismiss then," says he, "your fears.[1] Proclaim aloud among the heathen how little we dread them; how we await their approach! Ye mighty men of Judah, arouse! Ye men of war, come on to the strife! 10. Beat your ploughshares into swords; your pruning hooks into spears; let even the weak say, 'I am a hero.'

"11. Muster, all ye nations round, and assemble yourselves and advance! Lead down Thy mighty ones against them, O Jehovah, the Captain of the Host of Thy people, from Thy height of Zion!

"12. Let the nations be roused; let them come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there shall I, Jehovah, sit, to judge all the peoples round.

"13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of vengeance is ripe. Come, get you down, ye warriors of Judah, from your heights; for your enemies are gathered like the heaped up grapes in the wine-press, and are ready for treading; the wine-press is full, the vats overflow; for as their sins are great so also will be their destruction.

"14. Terrible beyond words will be the tumult in the valley of judgment,[2] when the near approaching day of Jehovah arrives! 15. Then shall be seen the signs that I have foretold as marking that great day of God—the darkening of sun and moon and stars! 16. Jehovah, also, shall give a war-shout like the roar of a lion, or like thunder out of Zion, His habitation, and cry aloud from Jerusalem, shaking the heavens and the earth!

"But, amidst all, Jehovah will be a refuge for His people; a strong fortress for the sons of Israel. 17. Thus shall ye know that I, Jehovah, am your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. Then shall Jerusalem be holy and inviolable, and the heathen will no more even for a time overcome her.[3]

"18. In that day the mountains and hills will flow with wine and milk; the water-courses (now so often dry) will be filled with perennial streams; and a spring from the temple will fertilize the now barren

[1] Joel iii. 9. The translation is amplified, for clearness.

[2] De Wette, "threshing."

[3] Judæa had been already humbled by Shishak and by the Philistines and Arabs.

land, even to the torrent-wady of the Acacias![1] 19. Egypt (on the other hand) will be turned into a desolation, and Edom into a barren waste, for their cruelty to the sons of Judah, and for the innocent blood of my people they have shed in their bounds.

"20. But Judah shall be inhabited for ever; Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21. And I will avenge on their enemies their blood which I have not avenged[2] already, and Jehovah will reign in Zion!"[3]

Such were two public addresses of the oldest Hebrew prophet whose utterances have come down to us in any fulness: addresses the like of which no nation besides ever heard. We who enjoy fuller light know that prophecy had a grander significance than the merely temporary or local.[4]

The glowing visions of temporal prosperity were doomed to remain unfulfilled, for the nation did not, by a true and lasting reformation, act up to the conditions on which it was promised. But Joel, and perhaps other unrecorded prophets of that day, had not spoken in vain. Following as they did the religious revolution brought about by Jehoiada, the people were roused to a deeper seriousness; the old heroic spirit was rekindled; Jehovah was once more honoured as the King of Israel and its Leader in peace and war. The altered moral tone shewed itself in a striking reaction from the feebleness of the past, for under Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham, Judah rose once more to a pitch of honour and prosperity which almost recalled the golden age of David.

It may, indeed, have been from a perverted religiousness that the troubled reign of Jehoash closed by his murder. Weak and easily led, he had listened, as we have seen, after the death of Jehoiada, to the small but influential heathen

[1] The only locality known by the name Shittim is the one opposite Jericho, in Moab. The Septuagint has "the Valley of Rushes," as if indicating a torrent bed, often at least partially dry.

[2] De Wette. Arnheim and Sachs. Zunz. [3] Joel iii. 21. [4] Acts ii. 16, ff.

party, the remnant of Athaliah's court, and had re-introduced the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. Still worse, he had allowed the high priest Zechariah, the son of him to whom he had owed his throne, to be stoned to death in the very precincts of the temple, for nobly protesting against his apostasy. The vengeance foretold by the martyr had not been long delayed. Hazael's invasion of Judah and the degrading tribute by which he had been turned back from the gates of Jerusalem had made Jehoash equally despised and hated. Thus marked, as it seemed, by the judgments of God: humbled before his enemies; guilty of the murder of a venerated high priest in the temple itself and during the holy offices: apostate, moreover, from the ancient worship; fanatics were not wanting to mete out to him the doom he had inflicted on Zechariah. Judah and Israel, alike, had become familiar with the murder of kings, and the fate of Jehoash was in keeping with the spirit of the times. Two inmates, or "servants" of the palace—sons respectively of an Ammonitess and a Moabitess[1]—headed a conspiracy before which he fell, in the forty-seventh year of his life and the fortieth of his reign. His apostasy, his crimes, and perhaps, above all, his want of success as a king, had left him no friends. Even a burial in the royal tombs was denied him, though he was allowed to rest within the city walls.[2]

Jehoash had lived eighteen or twenty years after the death of Jehu,[3] and the invasion by Hazael must have taken place in the twenty-fourth year of his reign,[4] while Jehoahaz was king of Israel.[5] The politics of these times are simply a

[1] The name of one of the conspirators is Jozachar in 2 Kings xii. 21, but in 2 Chron. xxiv. 26 it is given as Zabad. The MSS., however, shew this to be a mere clerical error.

[2] 2 Kings xii. 21. 2 Chron. xxiv. 23–25.

[3] According to the present Biblical chronology, Jehu died in 855. Jehoash in 837.

[4] 2 Chron. xxiv. 23.

[5] In his second year.

reflection of the aggressiveness or quiet of the armies of Assyria. But Shalmaneser II. left little rest for the western countries of Asia. In the eighteenth year of his reign, that is, about B.C. 840, he tells us,[1] "I crossed the Euphrates for the sixteenth time. Hazael, of the land of Aram (Syria), trusting to the strength of his army, assembled it in countless numbers, and intrenched himself in the tops of the mountains, on the edge of the Lebanon range. I fought with him and gained a great victory, taking 16,000 of his soldiers with their arms; 1,121 of his chariots; 470 waggons of war-stores, and all his baggage. To save his life he fled, and I pursued him. I besieged him in Damascus, his capital, and destroyed the trees round it. I then marched to the hills of the Hauran and destroyed, laid desolate, and burned with fire, towns without number, and led away innumerable prisoners." Then, following the high road from Damascus to the Mediterranean, he caused a likeness of himself, in the imperial robes, to be cut on the smoothed face of the rock at the side of the narrow road along the coast, high over the sea beneath, at Baalrosh, an outlying pass at the mouth of the Dog River, near Beirout, where I have seen it. "At that place," he adds, "I received tribute from Tyre and Sidon, and from Jehu, the son of Omri," giving the Hebrew king a genealogy he little deserved, as the house of Omri had perished by his hands. "I then marched to the mountains near the Mediterranean, and set up my royal likeness there."[2]

The hideous savagery of which the Great King boasts in

[1] Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. 92.

[2] Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. pp. 34, 41. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 107–8. On the Monuments, etc., at the Nahr el Kelb, see *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vii. p. 331 ff.

the narrative of his campaigns might well strike terror into all weak States, and make them eager to purchase immunity from invasion by becoming his tributary vassals. He tells us that he swept all hostile lands like a whirlwind, slew all the fighting men of cities that opposed him, built pyramids

The Obelisk of Shalmaneser II.

of heads at the town gates, burned alive the sons and daughters of the chief men, and spread devastation and death.[1] He glories in having raised no fewer than five of his ghastly skull-pyramids. Three years after his first attack on Hazael, he invaded Syria again and destroyed more of its towns, afterwards marching to the coast to

[1] Monolith Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. iii. pp. 84–100. Menant, p. 100

receive the tribute of Tyre, Sidon, and Gebal, which seems to have been left unpaid.[1]

That Jehu should have become the vassal of Assyria, as is twice recorded by Shalmaneser, was apparently the only course left to him if he desired to escape utter destruction from Syria on the one hand, or Assyria on the other. By doing homage to the Great King he at once secured his territories from invasion, and obtained protection against Hazael, though such an alliance would naturally embitter the fierce Syrian, and may have been the immediate cause of his repeated attacks, which, however, brought down on

him the wrath of Shalmaneser, as an outrage on one of his vassals, and thus in the end effectually crippled Damascus.[2]

The famous obelisk, on which the fact of Jehu's becoming tributary to Assyria is recorded, is of black basalt, and is about seven feet high, and two feet broad at the base.

[1] Obelisk Inscription. *Records of the Past*, vol. v. p. 35. Menant, p. 101. Schrader, p. 105. Shalmaneser had led 120,000 men against Benhadad and the Syrian league. This gives us an idea of the size of his armies. Menant, p. 117. Hazael had been designated to the throne of Damascus by Elisha about the same time as Jehu gained that of Samaria. Menant thinks the death of Ahab happened in the year B.C. 853. Adding fourteen years for the reigns of Ahaziah and Joram, this would make the accession of Jehu fall in the year 839, instead of 833 as by the common reckoning. Menant, p. 118.

[2] Jehu's alliance with Assyria was an anticipation of what happened in the reigns of Pekah and Ahaz, except that Ahaz took the place of Jehu, while Pekah allied himself with Syria against Judah, in revenge for this.

On each side, sculptures, in five compartments, fill about half the space, the rest being covered with the royal annals. One of the subjects depicted is, fortunately, the payment of tribute by Jehu, and thus we have a glimpse of the details of life in Israel in his time. The tribute bearers are represented in robes elaborately fringed, and reaching almost to the feet. They wear hats almost like Phrygian bonnets; their arms are bare from the elbows; and their beards and hair elaborately curled, like those of the Assyrians. They bring bars of silver and gold; gold in plates; gold table utensils; gold drinking vessels, and others, also of gold, for lifting wine from the great central vase in which it was mixed at banquets; bars of lead; a sceptre for the Great King; spears, etc.[1] Dress and personal adornment were thus as carefully studied in those days as now; the textile arts flourished, with all the trades this implies, and life in the upper ranks had not a little of the splendour of modern times, as well as abundant conveniences, comforts, and even luxuries. It would seem indeed that Samaria could even boast of a metal coinage, for a coin lately noticed in the British Museum appears to belong to Jehu's reign. The characters on it resemble exactly those on the Moabite stone, except that they are drawn more perfectly. Jehu is represented as standing in a "winged chariot," his name appearing round the edge of the coin, over his head.[2]

The influence of Elijah, acting through his successor, had triumphed in the revolution Jehu effected, but there was no such improvement in the national fortunes as might have been expected. Henceforward, indeed, notwithstanding temporary gleams of prosperity, the history of Israel is

[1] Inscription on the Obelisk. Schrader's translation. *Keilinschr.*, 106.
[2] *Pal. Fund Report*, 1881, p. 19.

one of steadily advancing decay. An external reformation had been brought about by physical force, but it left the morals of the people as before. It was to little effect, therefore, that the foreign element in religion and politics had been cast out, or the kingdom again set in a measure on its original basis. Jehovah might be once more honoured, but it was in connection with the calves of Bethel and Dan. Jeroboam's sanctuary at the former was still the "king's chapel" and "the royal" or "national temple."[1] The strength of Samaria again became the popular boast.[2] Israel and Judah no longer cultivated the close relations that had marked the dynasty of Omri. Yet the prophets acted for the time in harmony with the rulers, and the popular liberties were more respected than in the past. It was of signal advantage, moreover, to the kingdom, that Elisha, the founder of the new royal house, lived for about forty-five years after its accession,[3] to guide and counsel it. But he did so without taking any prominent part in public affairs; devoting himself, apparently, in the main, to the great task of superintending the schools of the prophets, which we often find him visiting.[4]

After a reign of twenty-eight years, Jehu died at Samaria and was buried there: Jehoahaz, his son—"He whom Jehovah upholds"—ascending the vacant throne.[5] Jehoash, of Judah—"the gift of Jehovah"—was now a man of about twenty-seven, and had still eighteen or twenty years to reign, but we are not told the age of Jehoahaz. The seventeen years of his rule saw Israel reduced by Hazael to the

[1] Amos vii. 13.
[2] Amos vi. 1.
[3] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 54.
[4] See p. 124.
[5] Keil thinks that Jehu died in the twenty-second year of Jehoash of Judah, not the twenty-third, as in 2 Kings xiii. 1. *Kommentar.* Josephus thinks it was in the twenty-first year.

lowest depression. Constant inroads of the Syrians drove the population from their homes;[1] a number of towns west of the Jordan were taken;[2] and the Moabites and others made constant forays from the east.

Things had indeed sunk very low. The whole of Gilead and Bashan as far south as the Arnon was in the hands of Syria,[3] and Hazael even forced Jehoahaz to reduce his army to no more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots, with 10,000 infantry. The northern kingdom was, in fact, well-nigh destroyed. Its people were haughtily trodden under foot, "like the dust," by their oppressor.[4] Three years before the death of Jehoash of Judah, Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son Joash, who was able somewhat to revive the fortunes of his country. Living on the most cordial terms with the aged Elisha, who still survived as his truest counsellor and the surest protector of the kingdom,[5] he set himself earnestly to deliver it from its overwhelming difficulties. Hazael had died about the same time as Jehoahaz, and had been succeeded by his son Benhadad III., previously the commander of his armies;[6] a man apparently much inferior in ability to his father. Fortunately for Israel, the power of Syria was already broken by Assyria, but it was still greatly to be dreaded. From across the Jordan other assailants, also, multiplied. Eager to wrest part of the eastern territory from Syria, for their own benefit, the Ammonites ravaged Gilead, committing the most frightful atrocities.[7] Every spring, bands of Moabites crossed the Jordan and laid waste the country.[8] But the sixteen years of the reign of Joash saw the breaking of these heavy clouds. Among those who

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 5. [2] 2 Kings xiii. 25. [3] 2 Kings x. 32. [4] *Ibid.*, xiii. 7.
[5] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 52.
[6] 2 Kings xiii. 3, 24. There is no mention of Benhadad III. in the Assyrian inscriptions. [7] Amos i. 13. [8] 2 Kings xiii. 20.

had not despaired of their country Elisha had always stood first, and now, in his last days, he was able to foresee the turn of the national fortunes. Struck with mortal sickness, he was visited by the king, whose grandfather he had set on the throne. Under Ahab, the prophets had been driven from the land; but Joash came to ask Elisha's farewell counsels and receive his parting blessing. Bending over him, he wept at losing "the chariot of Israel and its horsemen;" for the dying man had been the true defence and glory of the kingdom. But the patriotism of the seer still glowed as warmly as ever. As he lay near the lattice window for coolness, he made Joash open it, and told him to bend his bow, the favourite weapon of the age, toward the east—the direction of Damascus. Then raising himself from his couch, he laid his own feeble hands on those of the king, and bade him shoot. The act was intended as a sign of approaching deliverance. Three arrows were sped, but the king should have emptied his quiver. It was a fatal error. Had he gone on, said Elisha, he would have destroyed Syria utterly; as it was, he would gain three victories over it.[1] One of these was won on the same field, at Aphek,[2] as had seen the defeat of Benhadad II.; the scene of the others is not given, but the result of the whole was the recovery of the towns on the west of the Jordan, wrested by Hazael from King Jehoahaz.[3]

Joash had not, however, to fight with Syria and the bands of Moab and Ammon only. In the third year of his reign a new king had ascended the throne of Judah—Amaziah, the son of Jehoash—a man in his early prime, for he was only twenty-five at his accession.[4] Of a brave and enterprising

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 14-19. [2] See p. 90. [3] 2 Kings xiii. 25.
[4] *Ibid.*, xiv. 1. 2 Chron. xxv. 1.

spirit, and true to Jehovah for the greater part of his reign, he wanted the solidity and calmness which his position demanded. His first act after being firmly seated on the throne boded well. Arresting the palace servants who had murdered his father, he put them to death; but it is especially noted that he spared their children, in obedience to the humane law in Deuteronomy, which forbade a man's offspring being punished for their father's crime.[1] David had given up the sons of Saul to death for their father's offence, and the sons of Naboth had been killed with their father; but a better tone of feeling was slowly awaking.[2]

Edom had been independent for the last fifty years,[3] but Amaziah determined once more to subdue it. Summoning the whole muster of fighting men of Judah, therefore, he invaded its territory, and defeated its army in the Salt Valley, at the south of the Dead Sea. Utterly worsted, the Edomites were incapable of any further active resistance. Under a late king they had built, or rather excavated, a new capital in one of the southern defiles of their mountains—the strange rock-hewn city of Selah—"the rock," or Petra. Lying, as it did, more than 4,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean, at a distance of about 70 miles from the lower end of the Dead Sea, and approached only by a series of difficult ascents, they fancied they were secure in its shelter against foreign attacks. Dwelling literally in "the clefts of the rock," they boasted in their pride that no one could bring them down from their high retreat.[4] But Amaziah resolved to make it his own. By a bold march he seized and plundered it; changing its name to Joktheel —in noble confession that it had been "subdued by God."

[1] Deut. xxiv. 16. If this book be so late a production how is it thus referred to in Kings?

[2] See Jer. xxxi. 30. Ezek. xviii. 23.

[3] Since the reign of Jehoram of Judah.

[4] Obad. 1. 3.

Yet the war must have been marked by terrible ferocity. Ten thousand Edomites had been killed in the battle at the Dead Sea, but 10,000 prisoners who had been taken, were marched on to Petra and there hurled over the precipices and "broken in pieces."[1] Rich plunder of flocks and herds, and probably of other forms of wealth, rewarded and increased the vain glory of the conqueror. Unfortunately for himself, he carried off their gods, instead of destroying them. Brought to Jerusalem, they proved his ruin. Tempted, one knows not how, to do so, he adopted them as the objects of his own worship, and burned incense before them; thus destroying his position among his subjects by the re-introduction of idolatry—especially that of the discredited gods of a people whom Jehovah had overthrown and whom they themselves abhorred.

Amaziah had hired a vast number of mercenary troops from Israel, to help him in his enterprise, but having been warned by a prophet that their presence would be hurtful, since Ephraim dishonoured Jehovah by worshipping the calves, he dismissed them, forfeiting the 100 talents he had paid for their assistance. Enraged at this affront, they avenged it on their way back, by plundering the cities of Judah through which they passed; 3,000 men falling in defence of their homes.[2] Nothing would satisfy Amaziah but war with Joash to retrieve his honour, thus wounded. Confident in his victorious army, he would listen to no dissuasion, though Joash with kindly but half contemptuous irony strove to shew him his folly. "The thistle of

[1] 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12. In 2 Kings xiv. 7, the name Joktheel is said to have continued "unto this day." As Amaziah's conquest, however, was lost in the reign of Ahaz—less than a century after—the narrative in the Book of Kings must have been written very soon indeed after the event. This is to be noted.

[2] 2 Chron. xxv. 6-10, 13.

Lebanon," said he, "sent to the cedar of Lebanon, demanding its daughter as wife to the thistle's son; but presently a wild beast, chancing to pass by, trode the vain thistle under foot."[1] "Abide at home," added he; "why shouldst thou meddle, to thy hurt?" Such a strain of rebuke, however, only made Amaziah the more determined. He was resolved to "see Joash to the face," and he did so, soon after, to his grief. A battle fought on the borders of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, only fifteen or sixteen miles west of Jerusalem, resulted in his utter defeat; he himself being taken prisoner. His army being dispersed, Jerusalem lay open to Joash. Thither therefore he marched, taking the captive Amaziah with him. Once more the holy city felt the calamities of war. The temple and the palace were sacked; hostages taken; the city plundered; and its wall broken down for a space of about 600 feet. But Amaziah was treated with a generosity rare in that age. Instead of dethroning him and annexing his kingdom, Joash restored him; contented with the glory of having been the first king of Israel who had taken Jerusalem. Amaziah lived fifteen years after his capture, but the deep misery he had brought on the land was never forgotten, and popular discontent at last broke out in an open revolt of Jerusalem, from which he fled to Lachish, now Tel-el Hesy, eighteen or nineteen miles west of Hebron, on the foot-hills of Judah. Pursued thither, he was seized and put to death; the poor honour being done his remains of bringing them back "upon horses" to Jerusalem, for burial in the royal tombs.

[1] 2 Chron. xxv. 18, 19.

CHAPTER VII.

THE INDIAN SUMMER OF ISRAEL.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Jeroboam II., ...	B.C. 825–771	783–743 41 years	815–774
Zachariah and Shallum, . .	771	743	762
Menahem, ...	771–761	742–738	761–751

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Amaziah, ...	B.C. 839–810	797–769	829–800
Uzziah,[1]	810–758	780–739	800–748
Jotham, ...	758–742	750–735	748–732

ASSYRIAN KINGS.

Samsi-Bin, . . . B.C.	823–811	Assurdanan, . . B.C.	771–754
Rimmon-nirari, .	810–781	Assurnizar, . .	753–746
Shalmaneser III.,	781–772	Tiglath Pileser II.,	745–727

803.—Rimmon-nirari's expedition to the Mediterranean, in his eighth year.

775.—Shalmaneser's campaign to the Cedar Forests of Lebanon, in his seventh year.

[1] Schrader points out that these figures are uncertain, since Uzziah was certainly alive in B.C. 740. There was a total eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, in 784. It was at its full about 1 P.M. Michaelis, quoted by Hitzig, *Amos*, p. 130. Another also occurred in B.C. 803.

NORTHERN PROPHETS.—Jonah, Amos.

Riehm makes Uzziah reign twelve years along with Amaziah, and Jotham reign from 750, with Uzziah.

THE days of Israel's deepest depression, under Jehoahaz, had driven that king to seek help from Jehovah, the God of his fathers, and his reign had, in answer, been brightened by the promise of a deliverer from their national troubles.[1] A gleam of sunshine had since then broken through the clouds, in the victories of Joash over the Syrians. But it was in his son and successor, Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu —well named after the founder of the kingdom—that the prophecy received its complete fulfilment. Cultivating friendly relations with Judah, or at least safe from its attacks, holding as he still did the hostages given to his father by Amaziah, as pledges of its good behaviour:[2] he was free to turn his arms against the foreign enemies of his country. Little is told of his character or of his wars, but the extent of his conquests, and the glory to which he raised his country, mark him as the greatest of all the kings who reigned in Samaria. It seemed indeed as if the times of David had come back.[3] The northern empire of Solomon was restored. From Hamath on the Orontes, to the wady of the Arabah,[4] south of the Dead Sea, his sway was acknowledged. Moab and Ammon were reconquered and made tributary, under native princes. The Valley of the Willows, on the border of Edom, became the southern boundary of Israel.[5] Ammon had long harassed the territory of the Eastern tribes which was not in the hands of the Syrians,

[1] 2 Kings xiii. 4, 5. [2] 2 Kings xiv. 14.

[3] It marks the uncertainty of the Old Testament chronology, that while the Authorized Version states that Jeroboam II. reigned 41 years (2 Kings xiv. 23), Graetz makes his reign 61 years and Ewald 53. Schenkel adheres to the 41 years of the Hebrew text. Kleinert reckons it at 51 years.

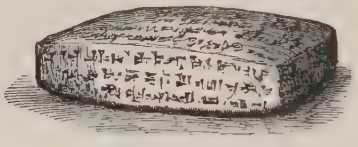
[4] 2 Kings xiv. 25. Amos vi. 14. [5] Isa. xv. 7. Amos vi. 14.

and its ferocious cruelties had roused the wildest indignation. But, to use the words of Amos, "fire was now kindled" in the wall of Rabbah—its capital—and its palaces burned down; the king and princes falling into the hands of the victors.[1] Moab had in part recovered itself since the raising of the siege of Kir Haraseth, and not only refused to pay the tribute imposed by David, but, as has been noticed, sent bands of its troops, yearly, into the Israelite territory, burning and slaying all before them. The vigour of Jeroboam soon, however, tamed their boldness. An outrage committed on a king of Edom, whose bones they burned to dust,[2] aided him, by rousing the Edomites to a fierce thirst for vengeance which made them his allies. Terrible recollections of the war passed down to future times. Wailing filled all the towns and cities of Moab, for neither stronghold, nor valley, nor upland escaped the spoiler. Flight to the wilderness was the only hope. Men hid themselves in the clefts and caves of the hills, like doves that nestle in the holes of the rocks.[3] Women, cast out of their cities, like birds from their nest, crouched together at the fords of the Arnon.[4] Fire and sword desolated the land.[5] The population was slain, scattered, or dragged away as slaves: the very vines, and cornfields, and pastures were destroyed.

Syria, the great hereditary enemy of Israel, already weakened by the Assyrian campaigns against Benhadad II., had been still more so by further troubles from the Euphrates, before the accession of Jeroboam; making it comparatively

[1] Amos. i. 13-15.
[2] Amos ii. 1. Literally, lime. See p. 207.
[3] Jer. xlviii. 28.
[4] Isa. xvi. 2.
[5] In Isa. xvi. 13, it is expressly said that the prophecy there given is quoted from an older prophet, very probably Jonah, who is mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25, as having roused Jeroboam to his great undertakings. Jeremiah applies it to his own time, ch. xlviii. Schenkel (art. "Jeroboam II.," in *Bibel- Lex.*) thinks Isa. xv. and xvi. are Jonah's.

easy for Joash, his father, to resist it successfully. There is no mention, in the inscriptions, of Benhadad III., the son and successor of Hazael, but both Syria and Palestine trembled before Rimmon-nirari [1] the second Assyrian king after Shalmaneser II. In the reign of Joash he had invaded "the sea coast," and, after taking Damascus, had reduced its king Mariha—"the lord"—to vassalage. "I marched," says he, "against the country of the Khatti (Hittites) and took Mariha, their king, in the town of Damascus, his capital.



Clay Tablet with Inscriptions, Assyria.

Profound fear of Assur, my lord, seized him. He embraced my knees and made submission. I imposed on him a tribute of 2,300 talents of silver, 10 talents of gold, 3,000 talents of copper, 4,000 talents of iron, and of a quantity of woollen and cotton cloths and fabrics. I took the standard and the royal umbrella [2] and the vast wealth of his treasures—all, in fact, that was in Damascus—both in the city itself and in the palace." He boasts, moreover, of having laid under tribute and re-united to his empire, Phœnicia, including both Tyre and Sidon; the land of Omri—that is, the kingdom of Israel; the land of Edom, and the land of Palestine,[3] to the Western Ocean.[4]

[1] Samsi Bin was the immediate successor of Shalmaneser II. He reigned from 823 to 811, but was crippled by a rebellion of his brother. When this was quelled, however, he undertook campaigns to the north, east, and south, and last of all to the west. But he did not exert any great influence on the western nations. Rimmon-nirari reigned from 810 to 781. [2] Borne over the head of the kings of Assyria.

[3] This is the first time the word Palestine occurs in the Assyrian inscriptions. It means, apparently, the country of the Philistines.

[4] Menant, p. 127, *Keilinschriften*, p. 113.

The reign of Jeroboam is marked by the fragment of sacred literature known as the Book of Jonah,[1] which throws a striking light on the greatness of Assyria, when the prophet went on his mission to it. That he should have been sent on such an errand of mercy to a great heathen city, is specially interesting as the first prominent expression of the Divine love to mankind at large, found in the Old Testament. The very harshness and exclusive narrowness of the prophet himself, heighten the charm of the narrative. God has pity on the great city, although idolatrous, but Jonah is unwilling to carry a message of good-will outside his own nation. His very conceptions of the Almighty, shew the imperfect ideas of his time. He thinks to escape from Him by leaving Palestine for a region beyond the sea. And, even when forced on his journey, his Jewish bigotry shews itself in his anger that a heathen population should have averted its threatened doom by a timely repentance.

A notice in the Book of Kings[2] throws an incidental light on the life of the prophet. He must have been prominent among his order in these stormy times, for we find him the counsellor of Jeroboam in a policy of vigour against Syria. Enthusiastically patriotic, the depression of Israel weighed on his heart. But he did not despair of his country even in its darkest hour. It was under the protection of Jehovah, and must rise again, if it repented and returned to its invisible King. With keen insight into the capacity of the new ruler

[1] The Book of Jonah may not have been actually written by the prophet himself, who was a contemporary of Jeroboam II. Bleek supposes that from Nineveh being mentioned in chap. iii. 3, apparently as a city of the past—it "was," not "is"—the composition could not have been before B.C. 626–606. *Einleitung*, vol. ii. p. 116. Kleinert thinks its Hebrew indicates that it was written in the period of Ezekiel's ministry. *Jonah*, p. 19. Gustav Baur, in Riehm, fancies its language shews it to date from the Captivity. Naegelsbach, in Herzog, contents himself with saying that it is assigned to different periods between B.C. 771 and the time of the Maccabees.

[2] 2 Kings xiv. 25.

in Samaria, he recognized him as the deliverer promised by God to save His chosen people, and animated him to take the field against the long-dreaded enemy, by the inspired assurance that he would be victorious, and would even extend the narrow limits of Israel well-nigh to the grandeur of David's empire; from Hamath in the northern valley of Lebanon, on the Orontes, to the south of the Dead Sea.[1]

Intense sympathy with his race, who had suffered so much from Damascus and Assyria, doubtless lay at the root of the prophet's aversion to the mission on behalf of Nineveh, divinely intrusted to him. In his eyes the heathen were only to be trampled under foot as the enemies of Jehovah. A day of God such as Joel had lately predicted, when they would be trodden like grapes in the wine-press of the wrath of the Almighty, was their just doom. Another century was needed before Micah and Isaiah could realize that they were hereafter to turn to Jehovah and go up to the mountain of His House from every land.[2]

Hurrying down from the hills of Galilee to Joppa, the one port of Israel, to flee as far west as possible, rather than go on an errand of mercy to the abhorred oppressor of his nation, we see the prophet eagerly taking his passage in a Tyrian Tarshish-ship lying in the roads; for neither then nor since, could anything more than a boat come close to the shore reefs. The narrative that follows has an antique simplicity in every line. Weary with excitement and travel, he sinks into deep sleep as the vessel weighs anchor. But a sudden storm, so common in the Levant, breaks on the voy-

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 1. Gath-hepher, where Jonah was born, is now the village of Meshed, "the monument," so called from containing the supposed tomb of the prophet. It is three miles north-east of Nazareth, and lay in the ancient territory of Zebulun. The Jewish tradition, that Jonah was the son of the widow of Sarepta, has no historical basis. [2] Mic. iv. 1. Isa. ii. 2. Ezek. xvii. 22, 23.

agers when only a little way out. The rowers do their best, but are speedily helpless. Part of the cargo is thrown overboard, to guard against foundering, but the waves trample over the decks and seem to claim the ship as their prey. All hope is lost if the heavens do not aid. In their despair, each sailor implores the succour of his own god. Still the ship rolls and welters in the storm. At last, by his own request, the prophet, conscience stricken, is cast into the sea as an offering to appease the Divine wrath, and the storm abates.

Explanations of the wonderful deliverance that followed have often been vouchsafed. That there are sea-beasts which can swallow a man entire is beyond a doubt. The white shark, which sometimes measures 30 feet long, is quite able to do so. Captain King, in his "Survey of Australia," says that he caught one which could have swallowed a man with the greatest ease. Blumenbach even states that a whole horse has been found in this kind of shark, and Basil Hall tells us that he discovered in one, besides other things, the whole skin of a buffalo, which had been thrown overboard a short time before. Ruysch says that the whole body of a man in armour has been taken from the stomach of such a shark. It is not uncommon in the Mediterranean, and is met with also in the Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. It is affirmed by naturalists that sharks have the power of throwing up again, whole and alive, the prey they have seized.[1] "I have heard," says Mr. Darwin, "from Dr. Allen of Forres, that he has frequently seen a Diodon[2]

[1] Couch's *History of Fishes*, vol. i. p. 33.

[2] Diodon—the "globe fish," so called from its power of distending its stomach into a great globe. It is also called the porcupine fish, from the spines with which it is covered. Its jaws are like the beak of a parrot, and are provided with a hard, tooth-like edge to crush shells, etc. The sunfish belongs to this family.

floating alive and distended in the stomach of a shark; and that on several occasions he has known it cut its way out, not only through the coats of the stomach, but through the sides of the monster, which has been thus killed." But all this does not account for the facts related of Jonah. It is, indeed, impossible to explain them by merely natural means.[1]

Shalmaneser II. had died in the year 823, and was succeeded by his son Samsi-bin, after a civil war of seven years with one of his brothers. Though energetic and devoted to war, he had to contend with so many revolts in his eastern and northern provinces, that there is no trace, in the few inscriptions he has left, of his having troubled the Jews, on the far west of his empire.[2] Dying after a reign of thirteen years, he was followed by King Rimmon-nirari, who filled each season with a fresh campaign, in many cases, however, against revolted provinces. Internal troubles had, in fact, been rife ever since the reign of Shalmaneser II., and were destined to grow steadily more serious, till they came to a head, some time later, in a wide rebellion which shook the empire to its foundations. Yet Rimmon-nirari was able to invade Elam and Chaldæa more than once, and to threaten the Medes. In the west, moreover, as we have seen, he crushed Damascus, and forced Phœnicia, Edom, the kingdom of Israel, and "Palestine," or Philistia, to continue the tribute they had agreed to pay Shalmaneser II. After twenty-nine years of glory and trouble, however, he passed away in the year 781 B.C.,[3] and from that time till the

[1] See art. "Whale," *Dict. of the Bible.* Dr. Pusey gives a great deal of information on this subject. *Minor Prophets*, pp. 257–9.

[2] Menant, vol. i. p. 25.

[3] Shalmaneser III. succeeded Rimmon-nirari in 781; and he himself was followed by Assur dan-ili in 771. That prince died apparently about 754, and was succeeded by Assur nirar, who reigned till B.C. 746. Tiglath-pileser II. followed in 745; but the whole empire had been in a flame of insurrection for years before. Each country,

accession of Tiglath-pileser IV., the Pul of the Scriptures, in B.C. 745, Assyria was little more than a wide sea of revolt.

It was some time during this long period of internal disquiet, perhaps towards its later years, when weakness in the throne was leading to a culmination of disturbance, that a strange figure from the distant land of Omri—his hair hanging long over his shoulders, his outer dress a rude sheep-skin mantle[1]—appeared in Nineveh, startling every lane and square, bazaar and caravanserai, by a piercing,[2] monotonous wail, in the dialect of Israel, which, though intelligible on the Tigris in such a brief sentence, must have seemed barbarous and uncouth. No one could tell who he was, or whence he came, but his bearing, appearance, and words proclaimed him a "holy man," speaking for the gods. The effect must have been much the same as when Joshua the son of Ananus, at the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, passed through the streets of the doomed city, raising an awful burden against it. "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, a voice against this whole people. Woe be to Jerusalem!"[3] Day after day, fresh crowds saw Jonah passing slowly along, ever and anon raising his weird cry that Nineveh would perish within six weeks. Over the vast space included in the aggregate of cities of which it was composed—from its outlying suburbs on the north to those on the south, and from the western gate by which he entered, to the scattered houses

indeed, was struggling for its old independence. 2 Kings xv. 19, etc. This is very strikingly shewn by Schrader. *Keilinschriften*. p. 124, ff. Art. "Phul," in Riehm.

[1] I assume that Jonah was in appearance like Elijah, or one of the old school of prophets. 2 Kings i. 8. Zech. xiii. 4.

[2] Jon. iii. 3. Hebrew.

[3] Jos., *Bell.*, V. v. 3.

beyond the walls on the east—nothing was heard but discourse about the dervish who had come among them and the awful words he uttered. Had the empire been then prosperous he might have attracted less attention. But suddenly appearing when rebellion raged in many provinces; when conquest had given way to defence, and the loss of a battle might bring to their gates nations infuriated with long oppression—the words and the man alike struck them with terror.

No capital needed repentance more than Nineveh. Luxury and indulgence prevailed. The wealth torn from vast regions filled its palaces. Its pride and cruelty had become proverbial. Even its religion was embodied impurity. The prophet's cry for once smote its conscience. The alarm soon spread from the streets to the palace. Trembling attendants told the news to the great king as he sat in his sculptured audience chamber amidst his magnificent court. It came like a voice from the higher world and filled him with dismay. He, like his people, was guilty. Repentance alone could save them or him. Rising from the throne, he laid aside his gorgeous robes, and, putting on coarse sackcloth, threw ashes on his head, in token of profound humiliation and sorrow. Nor was even this enough. Summoning his nobles, he decreed that a solemn fast should be kept, in which neither man nor beast should eat or drink. The people must put on sackcloth, and even the beasts be wrapped in it.[1] All men were to "cry mightily to God, and turn from their evil way and from the violence that was in their hands."[2]

[1] Herodotus, ix. 24, tells us that in the mourning for Masistius, a little before the battle of Platæa, the Persian troops not only shaved off their own hair, but shaved also their horses and beasts of burden. It is a relic of the feeling which marked Nineveh, that in our stately funerals the horses wear trappings of black cloth.

[2] Jon. iii. 7, 8.

The lessons taught by the concluding portion of the book form an era in the development of true religious feeling. A city as intensely abhorred by the Jews as Carthage was by Rome, or France, under the elder Napoleon, by Germany, had been pardoned by God, through the preaching of one of their race. It could no longer be claimed that Jehovah was exclusively their God. The bitter narrowness of later Judaism was anticipated and condemned. The universal brotherhood of man taught by our Lord was foreshadowed. That a Jew, moreover, should thus have involuntarily brought mercy to the enemies of his nation, enforced the true conception of that boundless sympathy of man with man, which makes the Good Samaritan a type of the spirit of Christianity. The withering of the prophet's gourd, with the regrets it excited, strikes home in all ages, as it must have done in Jonah's day, the contrast between the infinite love of heaven and the selfish coldness of man. The growth of a night[1] can be pitied when it touches ourselves; but unspeakably higher claims too often awaken no tenderness where we are not personally concerned.

While Damascus, on the east of the northern kingdom, had been captured and plundered by Assyria in B.C. 804, when Jeroboam II., according to Schenkel, was in the twelfth year of his reign, Phœnicia, on the west, had been weakened by the attacks of Assyria when Jeroboam II. began his reign. Civil wars, which in the end led to the flight of Elissa, or Dido, to Africa, where she founded Carthage in B.C. 812,[2]

[1] Apparently the palma christi, or castor oil plant. Robinson (vol. i. p. 553) says it still grows to a large size in the Jordan valley. Its growth is wonderfully rapid in any case, though here it was miraculous. It rises to the height of an olive tree. "On warm days, when a small rain falls, black caterpillars are generated in great numbers on this plant, which, in one night, often so suddenly cut off its leaves, that only their bare ribs remain." Quotation in Pusey.

[2] Mövers, vol. ii. pt. i. 362, pt. ii. 150.

had broken the power of Tyre, now, like Samaria, a tributary of Assyria, and secured Israel from its co-operation with her enemies. The circumstances of her neighbour thus favoured her recovery of political importance under so vigorous and able a ruler. Taking advantage of this state of affairs, Jeroboam had been able to "restore the coast of Israel, from the entering in of Hamath," on the Orontes, "to the Sea of the Plain"—that is, the Dead Sea.[1] Nor were matters less propitious in the south. Uzziah, now king of Judah, while avoiding such dangerous relations with Jeroboam as those of his predecessors with the house of Omri, lived at peace with one so able and powerful. The citizens of the northern kingdom had free intercourse with those of the southern. Pilgrimages to the ancient sanctuary at Beersheba, where calf worship like that at Dan and Bethel seems to have been practised, came into fashion,[2] and, in all probability, a few faithful souls from time to time attended the temple services at Jerusalem. Jehovah had at last given "Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians;" and they were now able, after many distracted and wretched years, "to dwell peaceably in their homes, as beforetime."[3]

Under the reign of Jeroboam II., the material prosperity of the kingdom rose to a height it had never previously known. Samaria grew rich from the booty of the wars and the profits of commerce and trade. Mansions of hewn stone rose on every side; the inner walls, in many cases, in imitation of Ahab's palace, covered with plates of ivory brought from Africa by the Phœnicians;[4] and the chambers fitted up with couches and furniture of the same rare material.[5]

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 25. [2] Amos v. 5; viii. 14. [3] 2 Kings xiii. 5.
[4] Amos iii. 15. [5] *Ibid.*, vi. 4.

Cool houses for the hot season; others, warmer, for winter, became a fashion.[1] Pleasant vineyards attached to them covered the slopes of the hills.[2] It was the Indian or St. Martin's summer of the northern kingdom. But, as the wealth of the few accumulated, the mass of the population had grown poorer. The apparent prosperity was only a phosphorescence on decay. Intercourse with the heathen communities round; the loose morality of armies dissolved after victorious campaigns, and dispersed to their homes; the unscrupulous self-indulgence and magnificence of the rich, and the consequently widening gulf between the upper and lower classes, were ruining the country. Above all, the old religiousness of Israel was well-nigh gone. The ox worship of Bethel and Dan had been gradually developed into a gross idolatry; Samaria and Gilgal had raised calf images of their own, for local worship.[3] The great temple at Bethel, at which the king worshipped, and near which he had a palace,[4] boasted of a high priest, with a numerous staff, richly endowed; not poor, like the priests of Judæa.[5] The whole country was filled with altars,[6] abused by superstition. As time went on, even the darker idolatries of Phœnicia, which Jehu, the founder of the dynasty, had so fiercely put down, rose again everywhere. A temple to Asherah had remained from his day in Samaria, and was now re-opened.[7] The women once more burned incense before her, as their favourite goddess, and decked themselves with their ear-rings and jewels on her feast days.[8] Silver and gold images of Baal were set up.[9] The smoke of sacrifices to idols rose on the

[1] Amos iii. 15. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 11.
[3] Amos iv. 4; v. 5; vii. 13; viii. 14. Hos. viii. 5; x. 5; xii. 11.
[4] Amos vii. 13. [5] *Ibid.*, vii. 10, 17. [6] *Ibid.*, ii. 8.
[7] 2 Kings xiii. 6. [8] Hos. ii. 13.
[9] Hos. ii. 8: for "prepared for," read "made into." Ewald. Hitzig. Pusey.

tops of the mountains, and incense was burned to them on the hills, under the shade of sacred groves. The obscenities of heathenism once more polluted the land. Maidens and matrons consorted with temple harlots, and played the wanton in the name of religion.[1] "Gilead was given to idolatry: they sacrificed to bullocks in Gilgal;" they "transgressed at Bethel and multiplied transgression at Gilgal."[2]

The country was, in fact, spoiled by prosperity, which no healthy public morality any longer controlled or directed. Society from the highest to the lowest had become corrupt. Drunkenness and debauchery spread. Wine had taken away their understanding.[3] The birthday festival of the king saw the most revolting excesses.[4] "The drunkards of Ephraim" became a phrase even in Jerusalem.[5] The very "priest and the prophet" reeled with strong drink at their ministrations.[6] The judge on the bench, and the military officers, covered with medals, were equally bacchanalian. Guests at feasts drank till the scene was repulsive.[7] Even the women were given to their cups.[8] The great ladies of Samaria, of whom Amos speaks as fair and well fed as the kine of Bashan, were greedy for drink. Such sensuality and profuseness led to all other vices. The passion for money became general. Corrupt judges, for a bribe, handed over honest men to slavery, as debtors, for so small a default as the price of a pair of shoes.[9] The usurer, after bringing a man to poverty, seemed to grudge him the dust he had put on his head as mourning. Instead of restoring

[1] Hos. iv. 13–15.
[2] *Ibid.*, ix. 15; xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.
[3] *Ibid.*, iv. 11: for "heart," read "understanding."
[4] Hos. vii. 5: for "him," read "themselves;" for "skins," read "heat." Gesenius. See margin, and the word "hamah" in the *Englishman's Heb. Concord.*
[5] Isa. xxviii. 1.
[6] Isa. xxviii. 7. Cheyne.
[7] Isa. xxviii. 6, 7.
[8] Amos iv. 1. Hitzig.
[9] Amos ii. 6. Hitzig. Schmoller. Amos v. 12.

to the poor in the evening, as the law required,[1] the upper garment they had taken in pledge—his sleeping-robe—men spread it, as their own, over the couch on which they lay down to nightly carousals, held in the house of their gods —where they feasted on the flesh of their sacrifices, washed down with wine robbed from the helpless.[2] Tumults, from such oppression, filled the streets of Samaria.[3] The mansions of the great were stored with the plunder of their poorer neighbours. Their owners lay, garlanded and anointed, on couches of ivory. Their banquets were splendid. Rich music filled their halls as they feasted. Nor would the wine tempered with water—the drink of their fathers—content them. They drew it pure from the huge vessels in which their predecessors had mingled their modest refreshment.[4] The husbandman had to make them oppressive gifts of his wheat.[5] The great landowners used false measures and false weights in selling their corn, and claimed full price for even the refuse grain.[6] Men had to pledge their clothes and their freedom for food.[7]

DRINKING SCENE, KHORSABAD.

Such was the state of things even in the earlier years of Jeroboam II., but matters grew worse towards its close, and

[1] Exod. xxii. 25, 26. [2] Amos ii. 8. Hitzig. [3] Amos iii. 9.
[4] Amos vi. 4–6. David is here mentioned as the inventor of musical instruments
See p. 54.
[5] Amos v. 11. [6] Amos viii. 5, 6. [7] Amos ii. 6–8; viii. 4–6.

in the years that followed his death. No truth, or mercy, or knowledge of God, we are told, was left in the land. Swearing, lying, homicide, stealing, committing adultery, housebreaking, and murder, till blood touched blood, ran riot.[1] No road was safe. Bands of robbers infested the thoroughfares. Life was no longer sacred. Even the people at court and the priests were deeply compromised in the worst crimes.[2]

While Jeroboam lived, his strong hand may have somewhat checked this anarchy, but at his death society was well-nigh dissolved. A few were immensely rich, but the mass of the people were in dread of slavery, to get the means of existence. Any revolution or disturbance that promised change was sure of support. A hideous Jacquerie, or peasant wars, like those of Germany or France, might at any moment be expected. To make things still worse, the monarchy, rejecting all control by the prophets, threw off the last check to its lawlessness, and was ready to maintain itself by any violence, however extreme. Around it were seen only an army absolutely at its bidding, corrupt judges, haughty nobles, and men grown rich by unjust gains. Israel had sunk into a mere military despotism in which might was right. Revolution became chronic. Before the fall of the kingdom, no fewer than three kings reigned in a single month.[3]

But the final ruin of the State was not suffered to approach, without an earnest struggle to prevent it, on the part of all that was best and truest in the national life. Amidst overmastering evil there was still some good; nor were thoughtful intelligence and a measure of culture wanting, in a community which could appreciate the elevation of

[1] Hos. iv. 1, 2. [2] Hos. v. 1, 2; vi. 9. [3] 2 Kings xv. 10–14.

style and copiousness of illustration and allusion, found in the popular addresses of the prophets.

As the reign of Jehoash of Judah had been marked by the appearance of the prophet Joel, "Jehovah is God," that of Jeroboam II. was signalized by the public ministry of Amos, "the porter," and Hosea, or "Joshua." The social position, and even the tribe of the last are unknown, but the lowly origin of Amos illustrates one of the greatest glories of Israel—that all its sons were essentially equal in the great spiritual commonwealth of the nation; the humblest no less than the highest being chosen indifferently by God for His special service as prophets. At one season he tended flocks on the pastures of Tekoa,[1] an upland village, five miles south of Bethlehem, in Judæa; in the autumn he earned a poor living by cutting the sycamore figs which grew in the valleys; a common fruit, which needed to be opened to get rid of its acrid juice, and make it edible. He was simply a labouring peasant. That he was not uncultivated, however, is shewn by his literary remains, which silently witness to the efficient education of even the poorest classes in Israel in his day. But he had had no advantages of any professional training; he was neither a prophet nor a "son" of the prophets.[2]

He seems to have made his first public appearance after Jeroboam had crushed Moab and finished his conquests;[3] while Uzziah, who came to the throne fifteen years after Jeroboam's accession, was reigning in Jerusalem.[4] It was, further, two years before the great earthquake which happened in that king's reign.[5] The prophetical impulse, he

[1] The name Tekoa comes from Taka = to strike; an allusion in this case to driving the tent-pins into the ground. The village was, hence, in all probability, only a group of tents used by the shepherds of the district.

[2] Amos i. 1; vii. 14, 15. [3] Amos vi. 14. 2 Kings xiv. 25. [4] Amos i. 1.

[5] Bosanquet (*Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 2) fixes the date of this earthquake

tells us, seized him as he was following the flock, and impelled him[1] to go forthwith to Bethel, the religious centre of the northern kingdom. True to the associations of his simple calling, his imagery befits a peasant. Threshing instruments; the harvest cart pressed with sheaves; the lion and the bear; the bird taken in the gin; the shepherd fighting with wild beasts in defence of his flock; the shining of the constellations, as seen when watching in the fields by night; the peculiarities of the Negeb; the incidents of rural life—the sifting of corn, the basket of summer fruit, the mowing of the hayfields, the labours of the ploughman, the sower and the reaper,—supply his illustrations.[2]

Urged by the Spirit of God to his adventurous journey, he at once obeyed. Boldly mingling with the crowds at the national sanctuary, he denounced the corruption and crimes of the great, and foretold their certain results. Nor did he hesitate to charge Jeroboam himself with special guilt in sanctioning the religious corruption of the day. Fearless even under the shadow of the palace, he proclaimed the approaching fall of the dynasty for its unfaithfulness to Jehovah. God would rise against it with the sword. He was equally unmoved by the fear of the multitude. Israel would surely be led away captive from their own land.[3] Simple peasant, as he was, in his rude peasant's dress he braved king and people. Men must have recalled the bearing of Elijah and Micaiah the son of Imlah, to Ahab.[4] Awed by his splendid audacity, they could not refuse him a hearing.

at B.C. 762. He proposes to lower the received chronology of the Jewish kings twenty-five years to make it fit into the Assyrian chronology, which is established by no fewer than five separate sources. This would make the first appearance of Amos to have taken place nineteen years before Jeroboam's death.

[1] Amos vii. 15.

[2] Amos i. 3; ii. 13; iii. 4, 5; iv. 2, 7, 9; v. 8, 19; vi. 12; vii. 1; ix. 3, 9, 13, 14.

[3] Amos vii. 9–11.

[4] 1 Kings xxii. 18, ff.

The addresses in which he embodied his message are wonderful as the utterances of one in such a position in life. They unite the flow and clearness of prose with the rhythm and harmony of poetry. Nor is their skill less marked. Coming from Judah, he disarmed the jealousy of his audience in his opening sentences, by denouncing the enemies of Israel—Syria, the Philistines, Tyre, Edom, Moab, and Ammon—and arraigning even Judah itself,[1] before he approached his complaints against Israel. He begins thus:

"I. 2. Jehovah will thunder[2] out of Zion: He will utter His voice from Jerusalem. As the blood freezes in the veins with fear, so shall the grass shrivel on the pastures of the shepherds of the south, at the sound, and the trees wither on the crest of Carmel![3]

"3. Thus saith Jehovah! Because Damascus has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have threshed Gilead with threshing rollers with iron teeth.[4] 4. For this I will send fire into the house of Hazael, and it will consume the palaces of Benhadad.[5] 5. I will also break through the bars of the gates of Damascus, and root out the inhabitants from On—that is, Baalbek, the seat of sun worship[6]—and him that holds the sceptre from Beth Eden—that is, Haran.[7] And the people of Syria shall be led captive by the Assyrians (when Damascus is taken) to the river Kir (in the far north," whence they originally came[9]), saith Jehovah!

"6. Thus saith Jehovah! Because Gaza has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They led away whole villages captive and sold them to the Edomites, their bitter-

[1] Amos i. 1–15; ii. 1–5.

[2] Literally, "roar," as the warrior when he rushes to the fight. The text is amplified, to make it clear.

[3] Hitzig.

[4] 2 Kings x. 32; xiii. 7. Prov. xx. 26.

[5] Hazael lived in the palaces of Benhadad whom he had murdered. Jer. xlix. 27.

[6] Ewald and Hitzig.

[7] Schrader.

[8] On Kiepert's Map, Kir is between the Black and the Caspian seas. But this identification is questioned. See Herzog, *R. E.*, 2d ed., vol. i. p. 602. Some place it in South Mesopotamia.

[9] Amos ix. 7. See 2 Kings xvi. 9.

est enemies, as slaves.[1] 7. For this I will send fire on the walls of Gaza and it will consume the palaces of the city. 8. And I will root out the inhabitants from Ashdod, and the sceptre-bearer from Askelon; and turn My hand against Ekron; and the still surviving remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord Jehovah.[2]

"9. Thus saith Jehovah! Because Tyre has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back My wrath from it. They bought whole villages of captives (from the Philistine forayers), and sold them to Edom as slaves; though they knew the friendly relations long existing (between Judah and Tyre, and that Edom and Judah were brothers). 10. For this I will send fire on the walls of Tyre which will consume the palaces of the city!

"11. Thus saith Jehovah! Because Edom has three times offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back My wrath from it. He pursued his brother with the sword, stifling all pity, and his rage tore at them continually, and he kept up his bitterness for ever.[3] 12. For this I will send fire on Teman[4] which will consume the palaces of Bozrah.[5]

"13. Thus saith Jehovah! Because the sons of Ammon have thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back My wrath from them. They ripped up the women of Gilead who were with child, in their wars to enlarge their territory.[6] 14. For this I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah,[7] and it will consume the palaces of the city, amidst shouting in the day of battle; in the wild whirlwind and storm of assault.[8] 15. Then shall their king go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith Jehovah!

[1] Joel iii. 1-6. Too weak for open war, the Philistines carried off whole villages in sudden forays, and took them to Gaza, whence they were sent by caravans to Petra.

[2] The very sites of some of the Philistines cities are doubtful or unknown.

[3] Joel iii. 19.

[4] The southern part of Edom. *Hieron.*, on Amos i. 12. Also a town about five miles south of Petra.

[5] A chief town of Edom—apparently the present Busseirah ("little Bozrah," in contrast to Bozrah in the Hauran) about thirty miles slightly south-east of the lower end of the Dead Sea. Kiepert's Map, and Kneucker in Schenkel.

[6] Arnheim, Sachs, and Zunz read—"They burst through the mountains of Gilead." But see 2 Kings viii. 12. Hos. xiii. 16, The Ammonites seem to have renewed border wars like those of Judg. xi. 4. The Assyrian was, in return, to destroy *them*.

[7] Rabbah = "The Great" city, or "the Capital." The sarcophagus (translated "bed" in our version) of Og, the gigantic king of Bashan, was preserved here. Rabbah was taken by Joab for David, but evidently did not continue long in Jewish hands, as it is here in those of the Ammonites again. See also Jer. xlix. 1. Ezek. xxv. 4, 5. The name was changed by Ptolemy II. (Philadelphus) of Egypt, to Philadelphia, on his rebuilding the city.

[8] Isa. xxvii. 8; xxviii. 2.

"II. 1. Thus saith Jehovah![1] Because Moab has thrice offended, aye, four times,[2] I will not hold back my wrath from it. He burned the bones of the king of Edom to dust (to scatter them in the air or strew them on the waters, and thus rob the dead of the repose of the grave).[3] 2. For this I will send fire on Moab and it will consume the palaces of Kirioth,[4] and Moab shall perish amid tumult, and the cry of battle, and the blast of trumpets. 3. And I will destroy the ruler[5] from its midst and slay all his princes with him, saith Jehovah."

Having won the ears of his northern audience by this denunciation of their enemies, the prophet dexterously passes to the guilt of Judah, before wounding the self-love of Israel by similar reproaches.

"II. 4. Thus saith Jehovah! Because Judah has thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. They have despised[6] the law of Jehovah and have not kept His statutes, and their idols, which are but lies, have led them astray—the idols after which they walked; 5. for this I will send fire upon Judah and it will consume the palaces of Jerusalem!"

Now, at last, he comes to the guilt of Israel and the judgments it will surely bring down.

"II. 6. Thus saith Jehovah![7] Because Israel has thrice offended, aye, four times, I will not hold back my wrath from it. The usurious and lawless rich sell (as a slave) the upright debtor, for money; the honest poor man for a debt of the value of a pair of sandals.[8] 7. They

[1] Amos ii. [2] De Wette has "many times" wherever "four" occurs.

[3] Josh. vii. 25. Never done but to the vilest criminals. Isa. lxvi. 24.

[4] "Kirioth" is translated in Jer. xlviii. 41, by Ewald, Graf, and Keil, "the cities." Dietrich, in Merx, *Archiv.*, vol. i. p. 320, thinks it refers here to Ar Moab, as the capital.

[5] Literally "Judge." They had, as vassals of Jeroboam II., no king, but only a "Judge" or "shophet."

[6] Zunz, *Bibel*, "rejected." [7] Amos ii. 6.

[8] The law authorized the sale of a thief who could not repay what he stole, but it gave no power to sell a debtor unable to pay. Yet the practice of doing so gradually became common. The sons and daughters of a debtor, or his wife and children, or even the sons of a debtor who had died, were illegally sold to repay debt - in some cases, if of no higher amount than the value of a pair of sandals. See p. 128.

grudge [1] the helpless even the dust they have cast on their heads in their grief, and take away the living of the wretched.[2] Still worse: the son and the father go to the same harlot: thus profaning My Holy Name.[3] 8. They lay themselves down on their couches at their carousals, by every altar,[4] on clothes given in pledge for loans. (though the law requires that they be given back before sundown [5]). They drink the wine extorted by unjust fines, in the house of their god (for their drinking feasts are held in their temples)."

That a people so favoured by Jehovah as Israel had been in the past should thus outrage His laws, excites the wonder of the prophet.

"II. 9. (If they would only remember, however) I destroyed the mighty Amorites before them. They were tall as cedars and strong as oaks; yet I destroyed them utterly, root and branch. 10. I brought you up, also, from the land of Egypt, and led you through the wilderness for forty years,[6] that you might possess the country of the Amorite. 11. (Then, when I had given it you) I raised up prophets from among your sons, and Nazarites from among your young men (to teach you and keep you in my law). Is it not thus, ye children of Israel? saith Jehovah. 12. (But how have you received them in these days?) Ye have made the Nazarites drunk with wine and have commanded the prophets not to prophesy. 13. I shall press you down as a laden cart presses that over which it rolls, saith Jehovah. I will make your State totter beneath you as a waggon totters when overladen with sheaves. 14. (I shall surely visit you in wrath, and, in that day) the swift of foot shall fail to gain a place of refuge: the strong man (paralyzed by fear) shall not be able to put forth his strength: the warrior shall not save his life; 15. he that handles the bow shall not stand; the swift of foot shall not escape. Even the horseman shall not save his life, 16. and the bravest among the brave will flee,

[1] Literally, "pant after."

[2] Literally, "they drive them out of the beaten road, into one in which they cannot walk." [3] Lev. xx. 11; xxii. 32. Jer. xxxiv. 16.

[4] Those of Bethel, for example; chap. iii. 14.

[5] Exod. xxii. 25. 26.

[6] Amos shews that he knew the story of the Exodus, and thus was familiar with the five "Books of Moses." See Exod. xvi. 35. Num. xiv. 33, 34; xxxii. 13. Deut. ii. 7; viii. 2; ix. 29. He knew also the law about returning at night the robe pledged through the day. But how could this have been, if the modern theory of the late origin of the Pentateuch be right?

throwing away his arms (to deliver himself) in that day, saith Jehovah!"[1]

It was painful to speak thus against his brethren, for the prophet, like a true patriot, yearned over those whom he was compelled to wound and condemn. He therefore justifies his language by illustrations used in the name of Jehovah Himself. Since God has so greatly honoured Israel in the past, He has a right to their loyalty. Nor can such relations continue if this loyalty fail.

"III. 1. Hear this word[2] which Jehovah has spoken against you, O children of Israel—against the whole race that I brought up from the land of Egypt! 2. You only (says He) have I fondly known[3] of all the races of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities. (for the very love I bear you!) 3. Two cannot walk together unless they agree.[4] (If Israel disobey God, He must leave them. Nor are these mere empty words. If He threaten, He will act upon His threat!) 4. The lion roars only when it sees its prey. The young lion in its den roars only when it has carried its prey thither. 5. The snare must be set before the bird is caught, but when set is not taken up from the ground if nothing be in it. 6. Such threats therefore (as God has uttered through His prophet), are sent to alarm, like the peal of a war trumpet in a town, or like a city tumult permitted of Jehovah (as a punishment, by the strife it raises). 7. The prophets, God's servants, are the appointed revealers of His will to man, and assuredly He would do nothing (to Israel) without disclosing it to them. (This, therefore, is the warrant for their claiming respect for their message.) 8. The roar of the lion fills the soul with terror; let all then tremble before the voice of God. Nor can the prophet withhold his burden; for when the Lord God has commanded him to speak, what can he do but utter the words put in his mouth?"

Having thus vindicated his divine commission, Amos throws off all reserve and proclaims the approaching judg-

[1] Amos ii. 9–16. [2] Amos iii. 1–8.

[3] This expression is equivalent here to "chosen" and "loved." De Wette. Schmoller. Hitzig.

[4] Zunz renders this, "Can two walk kindly together without having come to an understanding?" So, in effect, most others.

ments on Israel for its sins. The word given him from Jehovah is this—

"III. 9. Cry out, O prophet, to the palaces of Ashdod, and to the palaces of the land of Egypt (and invite them, as neighbouring kingdoms), to assemble on the mountains of Samaria[1] and witness the tumults (and anarchy) in the midst of the city; the oppression in its bosom. (It may well fill even heathen peoples with wonder.) 10. For they neither know nor care to do what is right, saith Jehovah. They heap up the fruits of violence and robbery in their palaces.

"11. Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah! An enemy shall surround the land (and cut off escape), and he will throw down thy (boasted splendour and) strength, O Samaria, and plunder thy palaces. 12. Thus saith Jehovah! As the shepherd snatches from the jaws of the lion (attacking his flock) two small bones of the leg, or a piece of an ear, so shall those sons of Israel who loll in the corners of their divans, and (stretch themselves) on the damask of their couches (be snatched away as captives, from amidst the slain!)

"13. Still further, says the Lord Jehovah, the God of Hosts! Hear ye this, O Amos, and testify it to the House of Jacob. 14. On the day when I visit the sins of Israel on him, I will also visit the altars of Bethel (the national sanctuary), and the horns of the great altar shall fall to the ground, broken off; 15. and I will overthrow the winter houses (of the rich and ungodly oppressors) and also their houses for summer; and the houses of ivory[2] shall be destroyed, and the great mansions will vanish, saith Jehovah."

Nor shall the women of Samaria escape, for they are no less guilty than their lords.

"IV. 1. Hear this word,[3] ye haughty dames on the hill of Samaria, sleek and well fed as the cows of Bashan, who (like your husbands) oppress the poor, and tread down the helpless; who say to your lords, Bring us wine, that we may drink! 2. The Lord Jehovah has sworn by His holiness—Behold, days come to you when you will be dragged (from your fair homes by the rude soldiers who have taken the city) as fish are dragged out with the hook, and your children as with fish hooks. 3. And ye shall go out (not by the gates), but by the breaches

[1] Spectators on the hills round Samaria could see into the city, which was on a lower hill. Amos iii. 9. See p. 47. [2] See p. 53. [3] Amos iv.

(made by the foe in the city walls), every one by that which is nearest, and will be carried away to the mountains of Armenia.[1] So says Jehovah!"

Passing now from denunciation, the prophet assails his hearers with the lighter weapons of irony.

"4. (But you will be very religious, will you, and thus avert your doom! Yet what is your religion?) Go, then, to Bethel, and sin (against God in doing so): to Gilgal, and add to your guilt. Bring your offerings every morning (to your unholy altars; a portion of) your tithes (not thrice a year at the great festivals of the law, as required, but) twice a week.[2] 5. Burn leavened bread as a thank offering (not unleavened, as the law demands), and publish (and spread, far and wide) your (liberality in) free gifts (to your priests and altars); for you love to do this, O children of Israel, saith the Lord Jehovah.

"6. (But mark what I think of such worship, says the Lord, by the punishments I have already sent on you.) I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"7. I have also withheld from you the latter rain for three months before the harvest, and made it rain in one city and not on another; one place had rain, and another, which had none, withered. 8. Two or three cities had thus to go to a third, to drink water, and could not get enough. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"9. I have smitten your corn crops with rust and blight: locusts have devoured the fruits of your gardens, vineyards, fig trees and olive trees. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

[1] *Targ. Pesh.* Vulgate. De Wette. Ewald says, "Ye will cast away your images of Rimmona—the female of Rimmon—on the mountains." Others read, "to Hermon." Some "to the Harem." If Armenia be correct, Amos here gives the first hint of the Assyrian captivity. Hitzig translates the clause, "and will rush to the hills as a refuge."

[2] This is a difficult passage. It is translated "every three days," by most. Indeed, the whole question of Jewish tithes is obscure. See Deut. xii. 5 18; xiv. 22, 29; xxvi. 12-14. From these passages it would appear: (1) that a tenth of the whole produce of the soil was assigned for the support of the Levites. (2) That out of it they were to dedicate a tenth to God, for the use of the high priest. (3) That a tithe—apparently a second tithe—was to be applied to festival purposes. (4) That every third year either this tithe or a third tithe was to be eaten in company with the poor and the Levites. But this explanation is disputed in some details; great difference of opinion prevailing as to the second and third tithes. Michaelis, *Mos. Recht*, vol. iii. § 192. Zehnte, in the various Lexicons. Knobel's *Komment.* Ewald's *Alterthümer*, etc., etc.

"10. I have sent among you the Egyptian plague:[1] I have slain your warriors with the sword, and have caused your horses (in which you trusted) to be carried off by the enemy,[2] and I have made the stench (of the slain horses and men) in your camps to rise up in your nostrils. And yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!

"11. I have sent destruction among you like that by which I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,[3] and ye were like a brand saved from the burning. Yet you have not returned to Me, saith Jehovah!"

Since all these lighter judgments had not led to their repentance, God would proceed to severer visitations.

"IV. 12. Therefore I will deal with you, O Israel (as I have spoken by My servant—I will destroy your city and lead you away captive). And, since I will thus deal with you—Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel (when He comes in this awful judgment on your nation)! For behold! Jehovah is He who formed the mountains and created the wind, and tells man what is in his thoughts, and turns the morning-red into darkness, and walks on the heights of the earth. Jehovah, the God of Hosts, is His name!"

But, now, swelling pity fills the heart of the prophet.

"V. 1. Hear ye this word[4] which I utter concerning you: this lamentation, O House of Israel!

"2. The Virgin of Israel is fallen: she shall no more rise; she is prostrate on the ground; there is none to raise her up! 3. For thus saith the Lord, Jehovah! The town from which a thousand men went forth shall have only a hundred left, and that from which a hundred went out shall have only ten left, to (keep alive) the House of Israel.

"4. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Israel! Seek Me (and ye shall escape these judgments) and live! 5. But seek not Bethel; go not near Gilgal; make no pilgrimages to Beersheba.[5] For Gilgal shall surely go into captivity and Bethel come to nought. 6. Seek Jehovah and ye shall live! (Seek Him) lest He burst, like

[1] Egypt was the home of the plague.

[2] Seemingly an allusion to the destruction of the military strength of Israel by the Syrians. 2 Kings xiii. 7.

[3] Apparently an allusion to the awful earthquake mentioned in Zech. xiv. 5.

[4] Amos v.

[5] The three seats of the calf worship.

fire, on the House of Joseph,[1] and consume Bethel, and there be no one to quench it.

"7. Ye who turn justice into wormwood and cast down uprightness to the ground, 8. seek Him who makes the Seven Stars[2] and Orion,[3] and turns (the night—dark as) the shadow of death—into morning, and darkens day into night: that calls for the waters of the sea and pours them over the face of the earth.[4] Jehovah is His name! 9. He causeth destruction to flash[5] forth upon the strong, and brings it down on the fortress. 10. Ye are they who hate the unjustly accused who defends himself (before you) at the gate,[6] and abhor him who speaks for the right. 11. Since, then, ye trample upon the poor, and extort from him bribes and gifts of wheat, ye shall not dwell in the houses of cut stone which ye have built, nor drink wine of the pleasant vineyards ye have planted! 12. For I know your many sins; your numerous transgressions. Ye are they who oppress the just; who take bribes; who turn aside the poor in the gate from their right. 13. The wise man, therefore, is silent in such a time, because it is evil!

"14. Seek good and not evil, that ye may live! In that case, Jehovah, the God of Hosts, shall (really) be with you, as ye now (falsely) boast Him to be. 15. Hate evil; love good; establish justice in the gate, and it may be that Jehovah, the God of Hosts, will have pity on the remnant of Joseph!"

But he foresees that they will not listen to his warnings and goes on to paint their doom still more fully.

"V. 16. Therefore[7] (because ye will not hear Me), thus (again) saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! (The curse must descend; the enemy must be let loose on the land! Then, when he is so) the lament (of dirge flutes and wailing women) shall rise (for the dead) in all your streets: and in all the highways men will cry, Alas! alas! and they will call in the husbandman from the field to raise the death-cry or make sad music, and the public wailing women to lament. 17. And there shall be wailing in all the vineyards, for I will pass through the midst of thee, in judgment.

[1] = Israel.

[2] Rather, Sirius, Stern. Hebrew, Kima; generally, "The Pleiades." Job ix. 9; xxxviii. 31.

[3] Hebrew, Kesil = the giant. Schrader. In A. V. generally "fool." Isa. xiii. 10, "constellations."

[4] Perhaps an allusion to the great earthquake wave.

[5] Hitzig.

[6] Where trials were held.

[7] Amos v. 16.

"18. Yet (there are) some (among you so blind as to) wish for the day of Jehovah. (Some, who think He will come on their behalf; not to punish them! Some, who mock at the long delay of that awful time!) Woe to you who (in blindness or mockery) desire that that day were come! What will it be to you? The day of Jehovah shall be darkness and not light (evil and not prosperity[1]). 19. (One danger shall no sooner be escaped than you will fall into another); as if a man fled from a lion and a bear met him, or, having come into his house (where he fancied he would be safe) should lean his hand on the wall, and a serpent (hid in a chink of it) bit him. 20. The day of Jehovah shall verily be darkness and not light; pitchy darkness without a gleam of light!

"21. (But I know on what your confidence rests in anticipation of that awful day. On your zeal in your worship and your outward devotion.) But I hate and despise your church festivals; I smell no sweet savour from the sacrifices of the great crowds at your feasts. 22. Though you bring Me burnt sacrifices and flour offerings I will not accept them. The thank-offering of your fatted calves I will not look upon. 23. Take away from before Me the noise of your hymns (chanted round your altars); let Me not hear the music of the harps (of your priests)! 24. Instead of these, let justice flow down your streets like water, and righteousness like mighty streams. (True religion, not outward, is the thing that can save you! Think you I lay stress on your empty ceremonies and rites?) 25. Did your fathers offer sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness through the forty years of their wanderings, O House of Israel? (Yet, though they did not, I brought them into this land.) 26. Therefore (because you have offered them to other gods), ye will lift up your idols in the day when you go into captivity—Sicceuth, your king (not Jehovah), and Kewan,[2] your star god (whom you have adopted from Tyre and from the Euphrates), and I will lead you away as prisoners (from this place to) beyond Damascus, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts."[3]

[1] Joel iii. 15.

[2] Sicceuth, an Assyrian god, known in Nineveh as Sakkoth, another name for Adar, an ox-faced god, and also for the planet Saturn and the god Moloch. Chiun or Kewan was the planet Saturn, in its Assyrian name. Sakkoth means "The Terrible One." *Bib. Lex.*, v. 397. *Studien und Kritiken*, 1874, 324, 352. Thus, even under the dynasty of Jehu, who had so fiercely uprooted Phœnician idolatry, it had once more raised its head in Israel, in the days of Jeroboam II. It is to be noticed that this passage contains the first allusion to the carrying away of Israel, but Amos does not yet name Assyria. This is done first by Hosea, in the next generation.

[3] Ewald. Schrader, art. "Sterne," in *Bib. Lex.* See vol. ii. p. 312.

How many separate addresses are included in what now forms the "Prophecies of Amos," it is impossible to say, nor can it be known over how long a time their delivery extended. It is certain, however, that there are several, for discourses among the Jews, as among other Orientals, have in all ages been marked by their pointed brevity.[1] The sixth chapter seems to mark a distinct outburst of holy indignation at some instance of wickedness in the upper classes, which had obtruded itself on the prophet, but it is levelled at the transgressors in Jerusalem and Samaria, alike.

"VI. 1. Woe to those[2] who think themselves secure (under Uzziah) in Zion: to those who think themselves safe (under Jeroboam) in the mountain of Samaria—the great men of 'the first of the nations,' (as you proudly call yourselves, ye) round whom the House of Israel gather (as their rulers and chiefs! Ye that care nothing for Jehovah and make little of His threatened wrath)! 2. Pass (beyond the Euphrates) to Calneh,[3] and see (how He has brought it low by the hand of the Assyrian); thence go to Hamath the Great;[4] then go down to Gath of the Philistines (which Rimmon-nirari has so lately crushed);[5] are they better off now than you; is their territory greater than yours that you should invite the same doom? Go to them, and see, you (whom Jehovah has thus long spared); 3. who will not believe that the evil day will come, and cherish oppression ever more closely; 4. who loll on couches of ivory, and stretch on your divans, and eat the lambs of the flocks and the fatted calves from the stalls; 5. who sing (at your drunken feasts), to the murmur of the harp, and, like David, contrive for yourselves new instruments of music; 6. who drink bowls of unmixed wine,[6] and anoint yourselves with the costliest perfumed oils, but give yourselves no thought of the ruin of your country.

[1] Delitzsch's *Ein Tag in Capernaum*, p. 131.

[2] Amos vi.

[3] This name does not occur in the Assyrian inscriptions. The city was apparently on the Euphrates. Schrader, pp. 19, 259. Schmoller says it is the ancient Ktesiphon in Babylonia, on the Tigris.

[4] Hamath had been taken by Shalmaneser II., when it was a member of the Syrian league against him under Benhadad. It was also again stormed by Sargon, in 720; two years after the fall of Samaria. Lenormant, vol. ii. p. 354.

[5] *Keilinschriften*, p. 14.

[6] Schmoller says "from sacred vessels."

7. (None the less will He on this account visit you!) Because ye act thus ye shall be led off into captivity at the head (of the train) of your people, and the (drunken) screams of the revellers will be hushed!

"8. The Lord Jehovah has sworn by Himself, saith Jehovah, the God of Hosts! I abhor all this of which Israel is proud, and hate its palaces (where such scenes are witnessed), and will give up Samaria, with all that are in it (as a prey to the spoiler). 9. And (in that day) if (by a rare chance) there be (still) ten men left (by the enemy) in one household, they shall die (of the pestilence that will follow). 10. And should the only friend [1] left to burn a man's corpse—(for there will be no room to bury it—come to do so, and) carry away the bones (to render the last offices to them), and ask some one in the inmost part of the house as he does so: 'Is there any one yet (alive) besides thee?' he will answer, 'No.' And the visitor will say, 'Hush! it is no use to pray to Jehovah now, for He will not help,[2] 11. for behold He has ordained all this, and will smite down the great house to ruins and the cottage to pieces.'

"12. It is as mad to try to run horses on the rough rocks of the Negeb or to plough there with oxen [3] (I know these parts well) as to turn justice to gall (as ye do), or fair dealing to wormwood! 13. You glory in an empty dream when you say that Israel has won dominion under Jeroboam, by its own strength. 14. God will raise up a nation against you that will plunder you, from Hamath in the far north, to the torrent bed of the Arabah below the Dead Sea."[4]

The characteristics of public discourse among the Hebrews have doubtless been the same from the earliest age of the prophets, for no people have shewn themselves more unchangeably conservative in their religious customs than the Jews. In the Talmud and Midraschim this is constantly illustrated; parable, proverb, and figurative presentation following each other with striking copiousness; the whole utterance, however, being no less brief than vivid. Such a style, indeed, could not be protracted through lengthened harangues. Brevity was imperative to give opportunity for reflection. The appeals, expostulations, and threatenings

[1] Literally, uncle or cousin.
[2] Eichhorn. Noyes. Hitzig. Schmoller.
[3] Wilton's *Negeb*, p. 60.
[4] Assyria is meant.

of Amos were, therefore, doubtless, delivered at different times; perhaps at different places.

The section which now begins takes the new form of visions. He had gone boldly to Bethel, the headquarters of the established religion of the northern kingdom, to lift his voice before the king himself, who was there at the time, and to warn the crowds who had gathered, perhaps for their yearly religious feast, at this great centre. He tells them[1] that Jehovah had shewn him three visions: the first, that of another visitation by locusts, which came up after the early grass had been cut and taken away, for the royal horses and mules,[2] when only the aftergrowth remained, on which the people depended for the fodder of their cattle. The thin grass of the open country had already been eaten, when Amos pleaded with God for pity. "Such a blow, O Lord," cried he, "will ruin the land, already so weak and helpless; spare it, good Lord"—and the supplication was heard: the locusts disappeared. But now, a second vision presented itself. A terrible consuming fire glowed over the neighbouring ocean till it dried it up, and then spread to the land, the best pastures of which are on the sea-plain, and there it presently destroyed a part of that which had been saved just before from the locusts. Supplication had averted the first calamity, but when now repeated it could only limit the second: a heavier destruction than before was, this time, allowed. The third vision followed: A wall appeared, over which stood Jehovah, shewing with a plumb-line how far it was from being true and upright. Standing in the heart of the land, not on the borders, the wall symbolized the House of Israel; its condition was a figure of that of the people as a whole, and its fate shewed that the

[1] Amos vii. 1–9. [2] 1 Kings xviii. 5.

evil to come would not be local, but universal. Utterly worthless, it must be wholly pulled down! The prophet no longer made any supplication on its behalf. There was, now, only judgment, without appeal. "Jehovah has said," cried Amos, "I will not forgive this people Israel, any more. The high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel laid waste, and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."[1] The country would be smitten by a foreign foe and the nation carried off into captivity.

This dark prediction of steadily advancing evil had been uttered apparently under the very shadow of the temple of Bethel, before its high priest, Amaziah, and the worshipping multitude. Awed by the sacred character of the prophet and his ominous words, no interruption had hitherto been offered. Now, however, that he ventured to speak of the king and the royal family, the high priest could no longer be silent. It might compromise himself if he were so, when treason was spoken. A message to Jeroboam in the neighbouring palace informed him that Amos, who seems to have been already known to the king, since his name only is given, had conspired against him, here, in the very heart of the land, and before the assembled people. His words were so unmeasured, so fierce and disloyal, that bad results must follow. He had said that the king would die by the sword, and Israel be carried off captive to a foreign country. Neither Jeroboam nor Amaziah dared to put the prophet to death. He might say what he chose in Judah, but must leave the northern kingdom.[2] Yet the order to leave was insolent in the extreme. "Begone," said Amaziah, in effect, "to Judah, and there eat your bread in peace, and

[1] Amos vii. 8, 9. [2] Amos vii. 10-13.

no longer trouble yourself with what does not concern you." As if, says Hitzig, he had told him, "Begone, eat your pudding, slave, and hold your peace."[1] "I came," answered Amos, with dignity and fearless courage, little known, I fear, in our day, in rebuking the great—"I came not of my own accord, humble man as I am, but at the bidding of God. It is He whom you dishonour in rejecting me. He commands me to tell you that your wife shall be put to shame by the enemy when Bethel is taken; your children killed; your lands seized, and you yourself led off into captivity. Israel, also, shall surely go into captivity in a foreign land."[2] Then, or while still on the borders of Israel, he delivered his last warnings. He sees a vision of a wicker basket of ripe summer fruit.[3] It is an emblem of the approaching national ruin. The land is ready for judgment. The songs of the palace shall be turned to howlings in that day, for the dead shall be too many to bury: they will be cast out in silence and left as they lie! Woe to the oppressors of the poor in that dreadful time; the men who grudge the hindrance to money making caused by new moons and Sabbaths; who starve the people by heightening the price of corn, and by selling it with false weights![4]

[1] Hitzig's *Amos*, p. 127. [2] Amos vii. 14–17.

[3] Amos viii. 1, ff.

[4] The gathering in of the summer fruit is in Palestine the last agricultural operation of the year. First comes the corn harvest, in early summer; then the vegetables, as beans and pulse; next, the vintage; and lastly, the gathering of the olives and other fruits. When these have been gathered, the circle of husbandry is complete. Afterwards there is no more to be done for the crop: good or bad, it has reached its end. The ephah was a measure, containing one and one-tenth bushels of our measure. The shekel here mentioned is not a piece of money, but a fixed weight of two hundred and twenty grains, or just over half an ounce. The Jews had no coined money before the return from Babylon, when they coined silver of the weight of a shekel. All mercantile transactions were carried on by lumps, bars, or rings of the precious metals, weighed by acknowledged standard weights. These fraudulent traders cheated in two ways; first, by having the ephah too small, and then by having the shekel, which weighed the silver they received in payment,

Jehovah had sworn by the excellency of Jacob, that is, by Himself, that He would never forget any of these works. The land would heave up to cast off the guilty ones, rising as the waters of the Nile do, but would sink beneath the weight of its iniquity, unable to free itself from the awful burden. In that terrible day when Jehovah visited the sins of the people, gloom would rest on the land like that of the great eclipse they had seen in the year B.C. 803.[1] Lamentations as when one mourns for an only son would fill the land. Then, at last, they would seek through the whole kingdom for a prophet to tell them how to win back the favour of God, but they would seek in vain. They had delighted in their idols and calves; they had sworn by them as dearest to their hearts—by the Asherah in Samaria, the calf in Dan, and the festal pilgrimage to Beersheba. But it would do them no good; they would fall as a nation, and never rise again.[2] Another vision, announced, it may be, at a subsequent time, closes the prophet's warning.[3] He sees Jehovah standing on the great altar in front of the sanctuary at Bethel, and commanding the angel of destruction to smite down the lintel of the Temple gateway, that its side posts and the whole front may fall, and bury the worshippers under its fragments. No spot in the land would be left for those who escaped this catastrophe. If they hid in Sheol, or climbed, for safety, to heaven, they would be dragged thence; the top of Carmel would not shelter them; no, nor the depths of the sea. For there the great water serpent, leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea,[4]

too heavy. Further, they sold the refuse (literally, "that which fell") of the wheat; that is, the grains which, being shrivelled, fell through the sieve, and which contained no flour. Coined money ascribed to Jehu (see p. 180) is doubtful.

[1] There were total eclipses in the years B.C. 803 and 784. Hitzig, p. 130. Also on the 15th June, 763. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Ant.*, vol. vi. p. 12. See Amos viii. 9, 10.

[2] Amos viii. 9-14. [3] *Ibid.*, ix. 1, ff. [4] Isa. xxvii. 1. Ps. lxxiv. 13, 14.

would bite them. Even to be led off captive would be no security; they would be destroyed by the sword! Jehovah has power to do this! They had seen in the great earthquake, how when He touches the land it melts before Him and fills all with terror; how He makes it rise and sink in waves like the rising and sinking of the Nile! It is He who builds His palace in the heavens and rests the vault of the firmament on the earth; who raises the sea into waves, as they had seen on the awful day of the earthquake, and hurls it on the land! Israel is no longer the people of God; it is no more to Him than the Ethiopians, or the Philistines, or the Syrians. Its sins have turned Him from it; He has utterly cast it off.

Yet He will still retain a people for Himself! If there be any faithful to Him in Israel He will sift them out from the chaff and save them.[1] The kingdom of Judah, moreover, shall be upheld: the broken walls of the now fallen House of David will be repaired and strengthened, and it will be raised to its ancient glory. Edom and all the nations shall once more be theirs.[2] Prosperity will return. There will be so much land to plough after the harvest that the second growths, then earlier than in the past, will be ripe before the ploughman has finished, and the vintage will be so great that it will not be wholly gathered before the late sowing has begun; the mountains will drop sweet wine, and streams of it will seem to melt the hills.[3]

[1] Amos ix. 9, 10.

[2] *Ibid.*, ix. 11, 12.

[3] It is to be noticed that verse 13 is virtually a quotation of the 5th verse of the 26th chapter of Leviticus. So much for the late origin of that book! If Amos knew it, when was it written? Hitzig attempts to solve the difficulty by supposing Leviticus to have been compiled in Jehoshaphat's day (2 Chron. xvii. 7), but this will hardly suit the new school, who suppose it an invention of the priests during the Exile. Stade, *Gesch. des V. Israel*, p. 62.

Though from Judah, Amos has no thought but of brotherly love to Israel. Her captivity will return in those happy days and be reunited to Judah; and all the tribes, once more a great whole, shall dwell, thenceforward, in rich prosperity, in the happy and fruitful land!

NOTE TO PAGE 195.—The great extent of ground occupied by Eastern cities of the present day enables us to understand the huge size ascribed to Nineveh, in the story of Jonah's mission to it. "I can believe anything of Eastern cities," said the great traveller, Mrs. Isabel Bishop, to me, "from what I have myself seen. There is so much open space left for unloading the camels and giving them wide resting places in the open air, and so much garden ground, and so many vacant stretches for any public use, that the cities are of very great size. Erzeroum, for example, is between twenty and thirty miles across, and Teheran is much the same."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LATER YEARS OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

See the Chronological Table before the preceding chapter, the details below being a continuation of it.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Pekahiah, ...	B.C. 761–759	738–737	751–749
Pekah, ...	759–730	736–731	749–729
Hoshea, ...	730–721	731–722	719–710

Schenkel intercalates an interregnum from 729 to 719, but the date of the fall of Samaria is wrongly put by him as 710, and this vitiates the whole of his calculations.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Uzziah, ...	B.C. 810–758	780–739	800–748
Jotham, ...	758–742	750–735	748–732
Ahaz, ...	742–727	735–715	732–716
Hezekiah, ...	727–698	714–686	716–687

Uzziah was apparently alive in 740, but Jotham had been associated with him as "regent," from the time of his having been struck with leprosy, and the son's name thus stands as king, as well as his own.

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

Assurdanan, .	B.C. 771–754	Shalmaneser IV.,	B.C. 727–722
Assur-nazir-pal,	753–746	Sargon, . . .	722–705
Tiglath-pileser II. (Pul), . . .	745–727	Sennacherib, . .	705–681

Siege of Samaria, 724–722.

KINGS OF EGYPT.

(The XXVth., or Ethiopian Dynasty.)

Sabaco, or So,[1] . . B.C. 727–719 | Sabatoka, . . B.C. 719–705
Tirhakah, . . B.C. 705–687.

These Egyptian dates are more or less conjectural.

More than two hundred years had passed since the death of David, when Amaziah of Judah, the eleventh in descent from him, fell a victim to unpopularity. His grandfather Ahaziah had been murdered by Jehu; his father, Jehoash, by a palace conspiracy. The lawlessness of the northern kingdom had tainted the southern; a king's life was no longer safe. Yet the general loyalty to the reigning dynasty remained undisturbed. No rival to the legitimate heirs thought of offering himself. The shadow of the great name of David still surrounded its inheritors with a measure of sacredness. The earlier part of Amaziah's reign had been glorious, but his elation had led to his ruin. Rashly insisting on attacking the proud House of Jehu, he had seen Jerusalem taken and in part dismantled: its treasures carried off; the sons of its chief men taken to Samaria as hostages; and he, himself, after having been a prisoner, had been indebted for his throne to the moderation of his opponent. The broken-down bastions of the city, and the

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 4.

enforced absence of the hostages from their families, had kept the disgrace rankling in the bosoms of the citizens, till, at last, fifteen years after his humiliation, he was murdered at Lachish, whence his body was afterwards brought to Jerusalem for burial.[1]

He was succeeded by his son Azariah, or Uzziah, a lad of sixteen, in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam II., beginning then a reign of not less than about sixty-seven years. The dates of this remote age are very uncertain, but, as it seems indisputable that he was still alive in B.C. 740, he must have begun to reign some time about B.C. 773. He was raised to the throne by a vote of the people,[2] though probably not the first-born son of the royal family. The country, at his accession, was still prostrate from the effects of the taking of Jerusalem by Joash, the father of Jeroboam, and the consequent loss of independence. The house of David, to use the words of Amos,[3] was "a fallen tent," for it would seem that even so late as the accession of Jeroboam II., he was the supreme over-lord of the whole Jewish territory and dependencies.[4] But Uzziah was a great king. By his vigour and ability he gradually raised Judah, till he had won back the full independent sovereignty over it, by the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam's reign, and entered on his definitive reign, for which the twelve years since his father's death had been only a strenuous preparation. It seems also that he then assumed the new name, Azariah—"God has helped me"—by which he is generally known in the Book of Kings. As his official title, it is not only found

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 19, 20. 2 Chron. xxv. 27, 28. For Lachish, see vol. ii., pp. 477–8.

[2] 2 Kings xiv. 17, 21; xv. 2. 2 Chron. xxvi. 1, 3. The reign is given as fifty two years, but he still lived, with his son as actual king, for a number of years; his leprosy laying him aside from active life.

[3] Amos ix. 11.

[4] 2 Kings xiv. 28.

in the list of Kings,[1] but in that given under the form Azrijahu on the Assyrian monuments. In his case, at least, "the help of God" seems to have been sincerely realized, and makes his name a true historical symbol. The good results of supreme power, in the hand of an able and upright ruler, have seldom been more strikingly shewn. He roused the fainting spirit of the nation, and kindled its old vigour and stormy energy to the noblest achievements. Nor was he less great in peace than in war and politics. The prosperity of the country kept pace with the respect it won among the nations.[2] Edom, which his father had subdued, was once more independent, but Uzziah early in his reign reconquered it, and re-established the long intermitted sea-trade with India, from Elath, a port on the Red Sea,[3] near Ezion-geber.

For the first time, also, since David, Judah was strong enough to attack and overcome the Philistines. Their principal cities, Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, were taken and dismantled; and new towns, or, rather, perhaps strong-holds held by Jewish garrisons, founded in their districts.[4] The southern Arab tribes in Philistine pay, who had overwhelmed King Jehoram,[5] were likewise crushed, and Uzziah's name spread abroad as far as the frontier of Egypt. As confusion and disaster increased in the northern kingdom, moreover, large portions of the old territory of Israel east of the Jordan fell into his hands. After the death of Jeroboam II., some time about B.C. 771, the anarchy caused by a struggle for the throne of Samaria, loosened the bond which held the east Jordan regions to it. The change from the degradation of past years, in Judah, under Uzziah, was,

[1] 2 Chron. iii. 12.
[2] 2 Kings xiv. 22. 2 Chron. xxvi. 2.
[3] 1 Kings ix. 26. 2 Chron. viii. 17.
[4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 6.
[5] 2 Chron. xxi. 16.
[6] 2 Chron. xxvi. 8.

indeed, amazing. When his reign began, the northern kingdom had virtually represented the whole of Palestine, east and west, but, before his death, Judah had gained that proud position, till, as we read in the Assyrian inscriptions, even the Hittite kingdom of Hamath, on the Orontes, in the far north, regarded the alliance of Uzziah as of essential moment in its schemes of defence against the mighty power of Nineveh. "Nineteen districts of the Hamath territory, with the towns near," we are told, revolted from Tiglath-pileser, and allied themselves with Uzziah, it may be on his invitation. Ammon, Moab, and the districts connected with them, gladly put themselves under his protection and paid him tribute,[1] though Hosea, as a northern prophet, denounced this change of fealty, declaring that the princes of Judah were like those who commit the heinous crime of removing a neighbour's landmark.[2] Many refugees, moreover, from different parts, sought refuge under the throne of one set "in truth in the Tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness."[3] Nor did he fall into the error of rash security. The hostages taken from his father having been restored, he repaired and strengthened the walls of Jerusalem, erecting towers at the angles, and arming them with the most improved "artillery" of the day, such as catapults, shooting huge arrows and hurling weighty stones at an approaching enemy.[4] His army, moreover, was reorganized, and thoroughly equipped with shields, spears, helmets, and cuirasses; the lighter troops having bows and slings.[5] The whole fighting manhood of the kingdom was entered on muster-rolls, so as to be available to any extent; the aggregate

[1] Isa. xvi. 1. [2] Hos. v. 10. [3] Isa. xvi. 5.
[4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 15. [5] *Ibid.*, ver. 14.

rising to no fewer than 307,500, with a select corps of Gibborim numbering 2,600 men.[1] It had almost caused a rebellion when David inaugurated a military census of the kingdom, but under Uzziah such a measure had come to be a matter of course.[2]

He was no less active in other directions. Devoted to everything connected with the country, he built towers in the outlying districts, for the protection of his numerous flocks and herds, and caused wells to be dug wherever required, for their wants. The slopes of the Shephelah and the upland pastures of the Negeb, once more, as in David's time, pastured the royal cattle and sheep, under the king's herdsmen and shepherds. The crown lands in the valleys were carefully tilled, and the districts suited for the grape planted with vineyards.[3] Wide prosperity, as Joel foretold, was following the religious reformation he had inaugurated.

Yet Uzziah's highest distinction was his loyalty to the old religion, to which he adhered with a sincerity and enthusiasm that reacted powerfully on the nation. The prophets were once more in favour. One especially is named. "Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God,"[4] seems to have been the royal tutor and counsellor. The altered spirit of the times shewed itself in the rise of such men as Amos, in the beginning of his reign; Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah, whose call to the prophetic office came in the year of Uzziah's death. A vigorous religious sentiment had spread since Joel's time, and, among others, animated the king. Hosea, who rose in Israel in the end of Jeroboam's reign, amidst the deepening corruption

[1] 2 Chron. xxvi. ver. 12, 13. [2] *Ibid.*, ver. 11.
[3] Carmel, 2 Chron. xxvi. 10 = garden land. The hill-chain of Carmel was in the hands of Israel. [4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 5.

of the northern kingdom, looked, with a tender yearning, to Judah, as the one hope of his race for its spiritual future.[1] But, unhappily, the evil which had spread so widely in the north was slowly gaining ground in Judah also, as the watchful eyes of the prophets noticed, with ever increasing sadness.

The worship on the "high places"—that is, on the hill-tops—still continued, and Hosea and Amos had alike to warn Judah against joining in the hybrid religious system of the northern kingdom and other idolatries, though, as a whole, the religious bearing of both king and people was commended as calling for "mercy on the house of David," the population as a whole shewing eagerness to return to the worship of Jehovah.

For a while, however, Joel's great religious revival held its ground, yielding only slowly to the injurious influences around. A number of Psalms attributed to this time shew how vigorously the higher principles of the past were cherished, at least by a noble few. Ewald assigns the 6th, 12th, 13th, 23d, 27th, 30th, 39th and 62d to this period, but, as their superscriptions represent them as written by David, we must hesitate to accept this later date for them. Pious souls, however, in an age which saw the birth of Isaiah, would often recur to these holy songs, so fitted to express their lofty aspirations and tenderest emotions, no less than their humility and godly awe. The temple services and private gatherings would echo such strains as those of the 12th Psalm

> "Help, Jehovah, for the godly man ceaseth;
> The faithful fail from among the children of men.
> They speak falsehood one with another;

[1] Hos. i. 7.

With flattering lips and a double heart do they speak.
Destroy, O Jehovah! the flattering lips,
The tongue that speaks proud things;
Which says, 'With our tongues will we prevail,
Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?'"[1]

The pure and lofty words of the 62d Psalm would find a response in all faithful bosoms:

"Truly my soul waiteth upon God;
From Him cometh my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation;
He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved.
How long will ye storm against a man?
How long will ye rush at him, all of you,
As at a shaking wall or a tottering fence?[2]
My soul, wait thou only upon God!
My expectation is from Him!
. . . . . .
Trust in Him at all times!
Ye people, pour out your heart before Him!
God is a refuge for us.

The sons of men are but a breath:
Mortals are at best a lie,
Laid in the balance, the whole are like a breath.
Put no trust in fraud;
Be not blinded by unjust gain;
If wealth increase, think little of it.
One word has God spoken;
Two are there I have heard;
That power rests with God,
And that mercy also, O God, is with Thee;
For Thou renderest to every man according to his work."

[1] Ps. xii. 1–4.

[2] The word is *jedar*, and means a wall of rough, shapeless stones of all sizes, built without mortar. *Jedars* are still the ordinary fences for gardens, vineyards, etc., and vary in height from four to six feet. After the storms of winter they always need repair; the rains washing away the earth from beneath them and leaving them frail and "tottering." Such dry walls are common in Britain. I have seen many of them, more or less in ruins — "shaking walls and tottering fences" — in Palestine.

[3] Ps. lxii. 1–5, 8–12.

Joel's words were bearing fruit. Not a few had "torn their hearts and not their garments,"[1] in earnest hope that the nation would be persuaded to do the same; that God might dwell in the midst of them and keep them from ever being ashamed.[2] Judah had already triumphed over the heathen round, as the prophet had promised. Only true godliness was needed in the people at large to secure such a vigorous spiritual life as would make them in the highest sense a kingdom of priests. Nor was religious enthusiasm ever more imperatively required. Trouble lowered over the North which might speedily break on Judah also and crush it. As at other periods of history, it seemed, moreover, as if nature herself were passing through a crisis. The ever memorable locust swarms of Joel's day more than once partially returned;[3] drought, and famine, and the plague, threatened the land, if they had not already invaded it,[4] and now, as Uzziah's reign was closing, came a physical convulsion so terrible that for generations it was known as The Earthquake,[5] and furnished a date from which events were

[1] Joel ii. 13.

[2] See Amos vii. 1.

[3] Joel iii. 17; ii. 27.

[4] Amos iv. 6–10.

[5] Amos i. 1. Palestine has been repeatedly visited by severe earthquakes. Josephus mentions one that happened in the year B.C. 30. Judæa was covered with ruins, and about 10,000 men perished by the fall of houses. *Ant.*, XV. v. 2. In A.D. 1151, the Hauran was in the same way laid waste by a physical convulsion. In 1837, a terrible earthquake laid Tiberias and Safed in ruins. The line of disturbance extended, in the direction of the fissure of the Jordan valley, for nearly 500 miles, with a lateral breadth of 90 to 100 miles. The shock was felt at Beirut and even in Cyprus. The heat of the thermal springs at Tiberias rose too high to be registered by ordinary thermometers, though whether the water actually boiled is not told. The earth opened and shut in great clefts, swallowing up many persons alive (see Num. xvi. 32). Seven hundred perished in Tiberias alone. So frequent, indeed, are earthquakes in Palestine, that the houses in Lebanon and Anti lebanon are built, as a rule, only one story high, with flat roofs, on account of them, and large buildings in many cases shew signs of the sinking or elevation of parts of their walls. Sodom and Gomorrah appear to have perished by an earthquake. Prof. Fraas, in Riehm. Furrer, in Schenkel Ruetschi, in Herzog, art "Erdbeben." Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, p. 189.

Allusions to the phenomena of earthquakes are not infrequent in the poetical books of Scripture. In Psalm civ. we read,

reckoned. The imagery of the prophets of the age reflects the deep impression it left. Towns and villages were overthrown like the doomed cities of the plain ; thick darkness obscured the sun at midday ; the ocean burst over the land, like the Nile over Egypt ; the land trembled and rose and fell as if in waves ;[1] the mountains seemed to melt and the valleys to be cleft, as wax before fire ;[2] men fled hither and thither, in blind dismay, from before the reeling hills and the yawning plains.[3] An incident which darkened the last years of Uzziah is connected by Josephus with this awful event, though the historical books make no allusion to any relation between them. David and Solomon had discharged priestly duties without any remonstrance ; but the reformation under Jehoiada, and the long pupilage of Jehoash, had consolidated the power of the priests, and enabled them to claim an exclusive right to perform the sacred offices. Uzziah, however, we are told, did not acknowledge this recent innovation, and having put on priestly robes on a day of high festival, entered the Holy Place to offer incense on the golden altar. For the first time, however, in the history of the monarchy, the royal assumption of such duties was resented as a sacrilege. The high priest Azariah,[4] with eighty of his colleagues, met the king and required him

"At Thy rebuke the mountains flee ;
At the voice of Thy thunder they tremble away ;
—Mountains rise and valleys sink—
To the place which Thou hadst founded for them."
—Ver. 7, 8 (Ewald).

In Ps. xviii. 7, we read—

"The earth shook and trembled :
The foundations also of the hills * moved and were shaken."

1 Kings xix. 11. Isa. liv. 10. Matt. xxiv. 7 ; xxvii. 51.
[1] Amos iv. 11, 13 ; v. 8, 18 ; ix. 5.
[2] Mic. i. 4.
[3] Zech. xiv. 4-6.
[4] 2 Chron. xxvi. 17, 20.

* Ewald, Heavens.

to desist. But Uzziah, says Josephus, was indignant, and threatened to put them to death, if they were not silent. Forthwith, he adds, a great earthquake shook the ground, rending the very temple, so that the sun shone through the opened roof, full on the face of the king, and as it did so a spot of leprosy shewed itself on his brow. Thus rendered unclean, he was forthwith seized and driven out of the sacred limits.[1] It is at least certain that he became a leper before his death, and henceforth lived in a house apart, leaving the management of affairs in the hands of Jotham, his son, though apparently in Uzziah's name. His very grave was dug in the field near the royal tombs, that they might not be defiled by a leprous corpse.[2] It is a striking illustration of the awfulness of the earthquake thus associated with the punishment of one of the best of Jewish kings, that in the days of Josephus, half the Mount of Olivet was believed to have been torn off by it and rolled in hideous confusion over a space of four furlongs, blocking up the ancient roads and overwhelming the royal gardens.[3]

The signal growth of priestly claims and authority, shewn in the prohibition of Uzziah from exercising the sacred functions as his predecessors had done, marked a turning point in the religious history of the nation. From this time the king and hierarchy stood in more or less antagonistic relations to each other. The sacred order came into greater prominence than ever before, and for the first time monopolized the performance of the public ministrations of religion.[4] The temple ceremonial was henceforth greatly developed and zealously maintained. Feast days, new moons, Sabbaths, and solemn assemblies,[5] were rigidly ob-

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. x. 4.
[2] 2 Chron. xxvi. 21, 23, Hebrew.
[3] *Ant.*, IX. x. 4.
[4] Joel i. 9, 13; ii. 17.
[5] Hos. ii. 11. Isa. i. 13, 14.

served. The sacrifices of rams and bullocks, lambs and he-goats, were regulated by strict rules. The ritual of worship was finally established in elaborate completeness on the basis of the ancient arrangements of David and Solomon, and under the exclusive care of a watchful and jealous priesthood. But this enthusiasm for forms, however earnest and sincere under Jehoiada, in the first reaction against the neglect, and, it may be, abuses, of half heathen times, passed before long, as all ritual is apt to do, into a merely mechanical service. Fanaticism on the one hand and hollow insincerity on the other turned the priests into the worst foes of healthy spiritual life.

This striking development of high sacerdotalism found its antidote in the rise of the new class of prophets, of which Joel and Amos were among the first representatives. Elijah had been the last, as he was the greatest, of the prophets of the past. Elisha had in many ways differed from him, and Gehazi proved immeasurably beneath his master. The order had been characterized till Elijah's time by isolation from the community, and by a dervish-like sternness which made even kings tremble; by its mission to individuals rather than to the nation; by its ascetic habits, its strange garb, and the high-wrought excitement of its appearances, in which music played a prominent part. But things had gradually changed. Already in Ahab's day, it had become largely degenerate,[1] though the great truths enforced by its nobler members had penetrated the conscience of the nation, however much they might be neglected. Elisha had overthrown the House of Omri by his direct though secret act, but the results of Jehu's elevation had not corresponded with the just expectations from it. His dynasty had soon fallen into the errors of

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 12.

its predecessors and proved a failure. The spirit of the times, also, was different. Political interference was no longer possible or desirable, on the part of the prophets. Their force in this direction had spent itself in the revolution of Jehu, and they could not return to it under the kings who succeeded him. In Judah, also, they had become more calm and measured. A spirit of disbelief in their claims had spread widely; in part through the increase of pretenders to inspiration. The younger school of prophets, foreshadowed by Micaiah in the days of Ahab, rose, in the person of Joel, first in Judah, then in the northern kingdom. No longer demanding supreme political power, or raising and dethroning rulers, they appealed directly to the conscience of rulers and people. Laying aside the harshness of the past, they retained their nobler influences. They became freer and less involved in outward combinations. Eternal truths gained more prominence, and were urged more directly and distinctly. Gathering strength and confidence with years, they worked more beneficially, and with more permanent results. But their advancement to this high moral power was only gradual. Regenerated, and, as it were, spiritually new-born, the order was opposed by the mass of the people, who were unwilling to be disturbed in their moral security. Mocking the roughness of the old prophets, they repudiated the demands of the new, who had, moreover, to contend with multitudes of pretenders, men flattering the great, and claiming supernatural power through unholy acts. But the true prophets remained faithful to their calling, and, as years passed, shewed themselves the noblest creation of Jewish history. Striving to introduce a new era, of faith working by love, they became the crown and glory of the spiritual life of Israel. Nor did outward discouragements daunt

them. As the prosperity of the kingdom faded away, they strove, ever more grandly, to save it by the righteousness they preached, and to encourage hope even amidst despair, by anticipations of a glorious Messianic era hereafter.

The reign of Jehoash[1] had already seen this new order—the Younger School of Prophets—in the appearance of Joel, the first of his illustrious brotherhood whose writings have come down to us. Though he still retained, in a measure, thoughts of war and vengeance, the keynote of all who followed him had been given in his demand that the people "should rend their hearts and not their garments," and in his announcement of the necessity of an outpouring of the Spirit of God as a precursor of national blessing. Amos had risen in the generation after, as his successor in the great work of spiritual reformation, repeating often his very words and thoughts,[2] and denouncing as vigorously the merely ceremonial and outward. In Judah, Zechariah, the companion and counsellor of Uzziah, continued the sacred apostolate, advancing in clearness of spiritual vision; if indeed he be the prophet whose writings are now in the Canon; no longer picturing the Messiah as a warlike monarch, but as the Prince of Peace, riding on a lowly ass, just, and bringing salvation even to the heathen.[3]

In the northern kingdom the succession was maintained by the prophet Hosea, whose very tribe and birthplace are unknown. Rising apparently towards the close of the reign of Jeroboam II., his activity continued till the fifth year of

[1] Credner, Mövers, Hitzig, Ewald, Meier, Keil and Davidson assign Joel to the reign of Jehoash.

[2] Amos i. 2, compared with Joel iii. 16 and i. 10.
" i. 6–10, 11, " " iii. 19; iii. 6.
" iv. 9. " " ii. 3 ff.

[3] Zech. ix. 9. Some think there were two prophets of the name. The balance of proof, however, seems against this, and the writings known as those of Zechariah will consequently be noticed hereafter.

Hezekiah, a period of at least sixty years; during which those of his utterances which still survive, were delivered, at unknown intervals. The events of that long period are the best commentary on their burden.

While Jeroboam II. lived, things continued in a measure settled, but with his death, in a gray old age, the dissolution of the State became imminent. His son, Zachariah, the last prince of his House, ascended the throne in the thirty-eighth year of Uzziah, but had reigned only six months[1] when he perished by a conspiracy headed by one Shallum;[2] in connection, perhaps, with a confederate whose name only, Kobolam, survives.[3] The prophecy that Jehu's House should reign till the fourth generation, and then violently end, was thus literally fulfilled.[4]

But the new king had a very short reign. In less than a month, a rival adventurer appeared, apparently from Gilead[5] and of the tribe of Gad[6]—what was left of manly vigour and warlike fire, seemingly lingering mainly in the district beyond Jordan, though stained by lawlessness and violence.[7] Menahem—for that was his name—had already, it would appear, established some kind of rule at Tirzah, the old capital of Israel, when Shallum's crime was effected, and from this stronghold he set out for Samaria, where he forthwith put the murderer to death, and himself seized the vacant throne. That he did not sit easily in it is shewn, however, by the ferocity with which he crushed opposition. Thus the people of Tephsah, or Tappuah, not far from Tirzah, and those of some other towns, were ruthlessly butchered for not opening

[1] 2 Kings xv. 8.

[2] 2 Kings xv. 10.

[3] In 2 Kings xv. 10, the words, "before the people," are in the Septuagint "Kebiaam," as if the name of a second conspirator. Ewald supposes the expression refers to a fellow-conspirator or rival of Shallum, of whom we know nothing further.

[4] 2 Kings x. 30. Amos vii. 9.

[5] Zech. xi. 8.

[6] 2 Kings xv. 14, 17.

[7] Hos. vi. 8.

their gates to him. Nor did he shrink from horrors which had seemed even to Hazael, a Syrian, nearly a century before, too shocking to be inflicted even on enemies.[1] Raised by a wild and rough soldiery, he needed an iron hand to keep them down, but he did not scruple to use their ferocity to secure himself against a fresh revolution. Yet, though he was able, through the guiding support of Assyria, to maintain himself for ten years, and to leave his throne to his son, Pekahiah, there was no longer the material in the sinking kingdom through which to found a permanent dynasty. Indeed, before Menahem had gained the object of his ambition, and made himself ruler of Israel, "three shepherds"—that is, "kings"—had been "smitten"[2] within a single month. So completely had lawless violence gained the upper hand in Israel.

That the new usurper should have reigned so long as he did is explained in part by the Assyrian inscriptions. For about a generation the name of Assyria had ceased to be a terror in Palestine, for the last invasion by the Great King had been that of Rimmon-nirari, who had taken Damascus by storm, so long back as B.C. 804, while the humiliation of Jehu, when he had to pay tribute to Shalmaneser II., was a distant tradition from the year before Christ 840. In the years, therefore, in one of which Isaiah was born, Assyria was only a historical name, for even the troubles of its neighbours could have made comparatively little impression on Judah, the frontier of which had never been crossed by any of the armies of Nineveh. It was in fact a time of eclipse in the power of the great city on the Tigris. Its military spirit, fortunately for mankind, had decayed, and its troops had to fight hard to protect even its own bounda-

[1] 2 Kings viii. 12. [2] Zech. xi. 8.

ries, at least on the north. But in B.C. 745, a revolution took place in Assyria, destined to have a profound influence on the history of Western Asia. The last monarch of the reigning dynasty died or was murdered, and the throne was seized by a military adventurer called Pula or Pul, who, on his accession, took the name of Tiglath-pileser III., and ere long founded the second Assyrian empire, which before his death rivalled the glory of that created five centuries before by the great king whose title—Tiglath-pileser—he had assumed.

The new sultan was a man of great ability alike as a commander and ruler. Led by him, the Assyrian armies were once more a terror to all lands, scattering all opposition and breaking up all confederacies. But their great chief had a higher aim than his predecessors. Hitherto Assyrian campaigns had been mere raids, to gather plunder and sweep it off to Nineveh, leaving the conquered lands to be conquered again when a new invasion was to be made. Henceforward, however, the conquests were to be permanently incorporated into the State and made Assyrian provinces, under Assyrian satraps, who should levy taxes regularly, according to fixed impositions arranged by the imperial exchequer at Nineveh, to which they were to be transmitted as a contribution, year by year, to the revenue of the empire. It was the first lesson in imperial centralization the world had seen, and marked the beginning, in one aspect, of modern history. There was to be one law and one government over the whole world, for Tiglath-pileser proposed to embrace it all, by his conquests, in his wide dominions. All mankind were to have him as their one lord, and to have one god—Assur, the national god of Assyria—as their object of worship. Such was the political outlook in Western Asia, in the closing

years of Uzziah. He survived the great revolution on the Tigris for a few years, not dying apparently before 740, but though his sympathy with the western powers who strove to check the advance of Assyria drew down on them the fury of the Great King, and on himself his deadly hatred and thirst for revenge, the story of their outcome belongs rather to the reign of his grandson, Ahaz, than to his own or that of his son Joram, who does not seem to have long survived him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NORTHERN PROPHETS.

The kingdom of the Ten Tribes had fallen, after a long anarchy of fifty years from the death of Jeroboam II. King after king had been murdered, and the throne had been seized at each new revolution by some fierce soldier chief, under whom matters went steadily from bad to worse. Rival factions had broken out as confusion and trouble increased. Old tribal jealousies had set neighbour against neighbour; Ephraim devoured Manasseh, and Manasseh devoured Ephraim.[1] Yet the nation, as we have seen, did not sink without a desperate struggle for life. Hosea speaks of a massacre at Betharbel, perhaps beyond Jordan;[2] perhaps at Irbid or Arbela, west of the Sea of Galilee, among the almost inaccessible hill caves in which, centuries later, the remnant of the people sought refuge from the Roman soldiery. The fortresses had been taken only after a fierce defence, in which many had preferred death to surrender. Mothers had thrown their children from the walls and flung themselves down to perish with them.[3] But at last the bow of Israel had been finally broken in the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon,[4] which had seen so many desperate struggles. The fall of Samaria, after its heroic resistance, had been followed by all the horrors of Eastern warfare. Children were dashed in pieces, and matrons ripped open;[5] the maidens and surviving men led off into captivity.

[1] Isa. ix. 21. [2] Hitzig. [3] Hos. x. 14. [4] Hos. i. 5. [5] Hos. xiii. 16.

Such an appalling catastrophe had not come without abundant warning. Men like Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah had watched its approach and raised their voices, strong in the might of patriotism, to bring about a timely repentance, and thus save the guilty land. But besides them, there must have been many others, true to Jehovah, but now unknown, who strove, in their own sphere, that the evil might be averted. Some Psalms still remain which bear internal evidence of having been composed in the last years of Israel.

"Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel," wails out an unknown singer;[1]
"Thou who leadest Joseph like a flock,
Thou who sitt'st enthroned between the Cherubim—shine forth!
Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
Wake up Thy mighty strength, and come to save us.
O God, restore us, once again;
Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

"O Jehovah, God of Hosts,
How long will Thine anger smoke at the prayer of Thy people?
Thou givest them bread of tears to eat;
Thou lettest them drink a full measure of tears;
Thou makest us a subject of dispute to our neighbours; (*who* shall take our land—)
Our enemies mock us among themselves.
O God of Hosts, restore us once again;
Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved!

"Thou broughtest out a vine from Egypt,
Thou didst drive out the heathen, and plantedst it.
Thou didst make clear room for it;
It took deep root and filled the land.
The hills were covered with its shade;
Its branches were like cedars of God.
It stretched its boughs to the Sea,

[1] Ps. lxxx. Ewald thinks this Psalm written after the Exile. So also does Cheyne, the latest critic. But I think it suits best the period of the text.

Its shoots to the Great River.[1]
Why hast Thou broken down the walls round it,
That all wanderers by the way can pluck it?
The boar[2] from the forest roots it up;
The wild brood of the field make it their pasture!

"O God of Hosts, turn back, even now;
Look down from heaven, and behold,
And come to this Vine;—
The stock which Thy right hand has planted;
The sapling[3] which Thou didst choose for Thyself!
It is burnt with fire; it is rooted up;
It is destroyed at the rebuke of Thy countenance!
Let Thy right hand be on (Israel); the man of Thy right hand;[4]
The Son of man[5] whom Thou didst choose for Thyself!
Then, (thus kept true), we shall not turn from Thee again;
Thus quickened anew to life, we shall call on Thy name!
O Jehovah, God of Hosts, restore us once again;
Cause Thy face to shine on us, and we shall be saved."[6]

But not only had such exquisitely conceived laments been heard in the darkening hours of the northern kingdom; prophets had striven to rouse its people to reflection. The great Isaiah, who was in the prime of his life when Samaria fell, sent a stern warning from Jerusalem to his brethren of Israel.

"Woe to (Samaria), the proud crown[7] of the drunkards of Ephraim! Woe to the garland[7] on the head of the fruitful valley of those struck down by wine! The crown[7]—their fairest ornament—now fading away! Behold a strong and mighty one,[8] sent from Jeho-

[1] The hills of the south—the cedars of the north—the sea on the west—the Euphrates on the east. So widely had it spread. [2] Assyria.

[3] Or, son. So Gesenius, Hitzig, Delitzsch, and others. "Son" was used by the Hebrews, from the simplicity and poverty of their language, in many ways strange to us now. Hence, in the A. V. it is translated, Gen. xxxii. 15, colts; xlix. 22, bough; Job iv. 11, whelps; v. 7, sparks; Ps. lxxx. 15, branch; Isa. xxi. 10, corn; Lam. iii. 13, arrows.

[4] The vine was planted by God's right hand, ver. 16. [5] The race.

[6] Kay. Hitzig. Ewald. Olshausen. Moll.

[7] Samaria crowns its hill like a garland on the brow of one at a feast. Wisdom ii. 7, 8. [8] The king of Assyria.

vah—like a storm of hail, like a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty overflowing waters—shall dash it fiercely to the ground! The proud crown [1] of the drunkards of Ephraim will be trodden under foot! The fading flower-crown, on the head of the fruitful valley!

"Ephraim's fairest ornament shall be, to the foe, like the (tempting) early fig, already ripe before the harvest [2]—which he who sees plucks at once, and swallows as soon as it is in his hand!" [3]

During his long public career of at least sixty years,[4] Hosea was especially the prophet of the sinking kingdom. His first appeals date from the closing reign of Jeroboam II., and were followed at intervals, till after Samaria had perished, by the others which make up his "Prophecies." Obscurely brief, he is often hard to understand; but there is an earnestness in his denunciations, and a tenderness in his pathos, that speak at once of his righteous indignation and gentle sympathy. It has been much disputed whether the opening chapters are an allegory or to be taken literally.[5] If the former, the prophet's wife, who turns to impurity, is Israel,—chosen by God as His earthly bride, but falling into idolatry and sin,—and her children are the nation which had sprung from her. If the latter, Hosea had shared in the misery of the land by marrying one who had turned aside to the vices so common. He had fondly loved her, and she had borne him two sons and a daughter, but had then left him, and been carried off as a slave, after falling

[1] Samaria. See note 7, p. 243.

[2] The usual time of fig harvest is August, but some ripen, in special cases, even six weeks earlier. Gesenius. An early fig was a special delicacy. Hos. ix. 10. Mic. vii. 1. Nah. iii. 12. Jer. xxiv. 2.

[3] Isa. xxviii. 1–4.

[4] The title says that he prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jeroboam II., Ahaz and Hezekiah. But from Jeroboam's death to that of Ahaz was fifty-eight years. His latest prophecy is not apparently later than the fourth or fifth year of Hezekiah. Thus the few fragments of his utterances preserved to us, are all that remain from a ministry of over sixty years.

[5] Eichhorn holds strongly to the literal interpretation, Hitzig to the allegorical.

into gross licentiousness. Eichhorn thinks the names of the children mark the advancing doom of the kingdom—Jezreel, "God will punish;" Lo Ruhamah, "who finds no more pity;" and Lo Ammi, "no more my people."[1] But with a touching love, the prophet tells us that, though Israel be thus disinherited, it will not be so for ever. In the end it will return to God, and He will again be the Guardian of the land, and make His people glad.

An abstract of Hosea's different prophecies is the best commentary on the history of the times. They open by the announcement that the blood so ruthlessly and lavishly shed by Jehu, will be avenged by the destruction of the House of Israel itself in a terrible battle in the plain of Jezreel, which had witnessed his pitiless ferocity.[2] God will endure the sinful nation no longer, and cannot possibly forgive it. Judah will be spared as not equally guilty, but God's power, not her armies, will save her.[3] He cannot pity Israel, for, unlike Judah, it is no longer His people.[4] But a better time is coming—when Judah and Israel shall unite under one head, of the race of David,[5] and fill the land. God will then call them Ammi, "my people;" and Ruhamah, "pitied."[6]

Turning from this fond vision of a happy future, Hosea now resumes his warnings. Israel must lay aside her sins lest God cast her out of the land. She has gone after idols which, as she thinks, have bestowed the material prosperity that marked Jeroboam's reign.[7] But when God visits her

[1] Eichhorn, *Die Propheten*, vol. i. p. 73.

[2] Hos. i. 4. In verse 5 the destruction of the military power of Israel is expressed in the phrase, "I will break the bow of Israel." The bow and arrows held the front place in warfare from the earliest antiquity till the discovery of gunpowder, in all nations except the few which relied on close combat with the sword.

[3] Hos. ii. 7. [4] *Ibid.*, ii. 8, 9. [5] *Ibid.*, iii. 5.

[6] *Ibid.*, ii. 1. [7] *Ibid.*, ver. 5.

in anger she will return to Him. She had ascribed her worldly blessings—her bread and water, her wool and flax, her oil and wines—to Baal, but God will take them from her, and then she will see that they were not from Baal but from Jehovah.[1] Her joy will be turned to sorrow; there will be an end to her idol feasts, new moons, Sabbaths, and great religious assemblies; her rich vines and fig-trees, the symbols of her prosperity, will be trampled under foot by enemies.[2] She will be punished for going after "the Baals," and forgetting Jehovah.[3] But mercy will still temper justice. Carried off from her own land, but still followed by prophets, the Valley of Trouble[4] will be a door of hope—affliction will reform her. She will again call God her husband,[5] and He will make a covenant with her—the lower creatures joining in it—that, if she keep thus faithful, war will cease in the land and she will "lie down safely." He will betroth her to Himself for ever. The tenderness of the prophet's words in dilating on this is touching in the extreme. The very heavens will plead for the penitent, that they may yield her, once more, their blessing, and God will fill them with the dew and rain, so long withheld, and these will feed the corn and wine and oil, and the cry of Jezreel—that is, of Israel—will thus be answered. It will be His people, and He will be its God.[6]

In Chapter III. the popular idolatry is again typified as impurity. Israel, forsaken by its Divine protector, because

[1] Hos. ii. 10. [2] Ver. 12.

[3] Ver. 13. Verse 9 shows that the women of Israel decked themselves in their best at the licentious worship of the Baals, putting on their ear-rings (the same word is used for nose-rings) and their jewels, and burning incense to the idols.

[4] Achor, literally, "troubling."

[5] Ver. 16. Ishi, literally, "my husband," or, rather, "my man." The very word "Baal" will not henceforth be heard. God will not have it, even if used towards Himself as meaning "my Lord." [6] Ver. 23.

it has first forsaken Him, is symbolized by a woman beloved of her husband, but now forsaken by him, for her manifold sins. Yet a conditional marriage contract is renewed with her, its final ratification depending on the full proof of her penitence during a lengthened trial. If Israel remained true to Jehovah during its exile, when far from its idols, He would bring it back and restore it under the rule of the House of David.[1] The loss of its independence; its king and court; its accustomed sacrifices; its ephod, abused to superstitious ends; its calves and idols, and even its house-gods,[2] consulted for oracles, would wake a yearning to return to God, and to unite with Judah.

Chapter IV. is a distinct address. The prophet fiercely denounces the wickedness and idolatry of the nation, and foretells their terrible punishment. He has pictured the exhaustless love of God towards them by the most striking images; love which no unfaithfulness could extinguish; love waiting to shew its tenderness on the first sign of their penitence. Now, however, he has to proclaim their indictment, and the very depth of his sympathy makes his indignation at their sin and folly the deeper.

"IV. 1. Hear Jehovah's word,"[3] says he, "ye sons of Israel. He has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth, there is no goodness, no knowledge of God among them! 2. They are perjurers, they lie, they murder and steal, and are adulterers; they have broken through all bounds,[4] till one (stream of murdered men's) blood touches another! 3. Grievously shall the land mourn for guilt so great; the men of the land will sink and die; the very wild beasts of the fields, and the birds of the air, and fish of the pools and waters, will perish (in the drought and misery with which God will smite the kingdom). 4. Yet neither prophet nor heavenly voice must reprove you; instead of that, you blame your priests, and contend with them.[5]

[1] Hos. iii. 1–5. [2] Teraphim. [3] Hos. iv. 1–10.

[4] Ewald says, "they break into houses" to rob and kill.

[5] The priest was the judge, in God's name, in many things.

5. (But so much the more certain is your utter ruin!) The people shall stumble in the day, and the (dumb) prophet (that does not reprove you) will stumble in the night, 6. and the whole mother-land shall perish. (Jehovah has said it!) 'My people' (says God), 'perish for lack of knowledge (of Me)! Because ye (O priests) have made light of knowledge (and have not upheld My honour), I will degrade you from being My priests; as ye have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget (Israel) your children! 7. The greater you have grown (in number, wealth and standing) the more you have sinned; your greatness, therefore, shall I turn to shame. 8. You (priests) eat the sin-offerings of my people (you grow rich on their sins); you are eager to have them do wrong (for their sin-offerings and penance-gifts, which come to you, are so much the more). 9. People and priest are thus alike (guilty); and I shall therefore punish them (equally) for their sins! 10. They will eat and not be satisfied; give themselves to impurity, but not increase; because they have left off to take heed to Jehovah!'"

The sins of the priests lead astray the people, who copy their example.

"IV. 11. Impurity, wine,[1] and strong drink dull the understanding of all. 12. My people consult wooden images as oracles; they make their staff prophesy to them.[2] Their (love for) idolatry (and its foul license) has led them astray; they have been faithless to God (their husband), and have forsaken Him. 13. They sacrifice on the mountain tops; they burn incense upon the hills, under the oaks, and poplars, and elms (of their heathen groves), because they like the thick shade (which hides their impurities). Your daughters (seduced by a worship so gross), commit fornication; your wives, adultery. 14. Yet I will punish neither. They are less guilty than you men, for you go aside with the vile women (of Astarte), and offer sacrifices with the temple-harlots (and the thoughtless women are thus led astray by their fathers and husbands!) 15. If thou, Israel, wilt thus commit fornication, oh, do not thou, Judah (at least), defile thyself! Go not over the border to Gilgal; go not up to Beth-aven,[3] and swear not 'As Jehovah liveth.'

[1] Hos. iv. 11–19.

[2] They used staves with different magic inscriptions on them, or staves with different signs, and divined by them. Ezek. xxi. 21.

[3] Beth-el = God's House, changed to Beth aven = House of idols; some read it Beth-On = the House of the Sun.

(Thus untrue to Him are you all, in heart!) 16. Israel has, indeed, become (towards her God) like a wild heifer, but Jehovah will (soon bate her pride and) lead her, like a weak sheep, to the wilderness, to feed there! 17. Ephraim is in love with his idols—leave him alone! 18. They drink till wine loses its relish; they give themselves up to impurity; their rulers delight in such shameful orgies, 19. but the storm-wind of My wrath will bear them away on its wings, and they will blush at these shameless idol feasts (followed by such debauchery.)"

With Chapter V. a new address begins; like the preceding, a stern indictment. It seems to have been spoken after the murder of King Zachariah, by Shallum, who himself was murdered within a month.

"V. 1. Hear ye this,[1] ye priests; mark, thou House of Israel; listen, O House of the King, for (God's) judgment is against you! (Instead of being protectors and upholders of the land) ye (priests, and ye dignities) have been like nets and gins for the people—like nets and gins spread on Mizpah (of Gilead) and on Tabor (in Esdraelon)! 2. You have busied yourselves with multiplied sacrifices, ye revolters, (when ye set up a new king on these places, to snare the people into deadly treason!) But I will punish you all! 3. I know Ephraim, and Israel is naked before me. At this very time, Ephraim, thou art committing fornication with idols, and Israel is (defiled with its sins). 4. Your love of idols keeps you from returning to your God; for the spirit of impurity is in your midst. You know not Jehovah! 5. Jehovah, the Pride of Israel, witnesses against you, therefore, to your face, and, for this, Israel and Ephraim shall fall by their iniquity; and Judah, also, shall fall with them! 6. Israel will one day, when too late, seek Jehovah, with sheep and oxen for sacrifices; but they will not find Him. He has withdrawn Himself from them. 7. They have been unfaithful to Him; they have begotten alien children.[2] Now shall the next new moon see their fields wasted by the foe!"[3]

Hosea seems, as he warms in his address, to see the punishment threatened, already approaching. Judah must warn Israel, and Israel, Judah.

[1] Hos. v. 1-7.

[2] Their intercourse with idols has corrupted the faith of their households.

[3] This passage is very variously rendered by different scholars.

"V. 8. Blow the trumpet (on the height of) Gibeah, of Benjamin;[1] blow the loud trumpet on that of Ramah (of Ephraim); cry aloud from Bethel, now Beth-aven, the House of the calf idols, (the foe is) behind thee, O Benjamin![2] 9. Ephraim shall be a wilderness in the day of vengeance; among the tribes of Israel have I made known what will surely be. 10. Judah's princes, also (those that by taking advantage of the troubles of Ephraim seize part of its territory), move back, as it were, the landmark;[3] on them will I pour out my fury like water!

"11. Ephraim is even now sorely oppressed; it is crushed as to its right, because it chose to follow after idols. 12. Assyria, My instrument, has already wasted its borders.[4] I have been as a moth consuming it, and like a gnawing worm to Judah—(to lead them to seek Me in whom alone is their hope). 13. (But, instead of this,) when Ephraim saw his feebleness and Judah his wound, Ephraim sent an embassy to the Assyrian,[5] and Judah sent to the fierce king; but he could not cure you, he could not heal your wounds. 14. Now shall I no longer be like a moth to Ephraim, but like a lion. Now shall I (no longer) be (like a gnawing worm to Judah, but) like a fierce young lion. (Since slight punishment will not do, I must increase it;) I, even I, Jehovah, will tear them in pieces and go away; I will carry off the prey and no man will rescue it from me; 15. I will go away from them to My own place, till they repent and seek My face. In their hour of need they will turn to Me, and eagerly cry: VI. 1. 'Up,[6] let us go back to Jehovah; for, as He has torn, so He only can heal us; as He has smitten, He only can bind up our wounds! 2. The shortest time[7] is enough for Him to restore us; on the third day He will raise us up (from our present death) and we shall live in His sight. Let us know (and fear) Jehovah; let us earnestly strive to know Him;[8] then will His coming forth on our behalf be sure (and glorious)

[1] Hos. v. 8-vi. 3.

[2] "The foe is behind thee." Hitzig. Keil.

[3] Deut. xxvii. 17.

[4] Assyria had desolated Gilead and Upper Galilee in the days of Tiglath-pileser. See p. 268. Before him, Shalmaneser II., in his attack on the kingdom of Damascus, had wasted the Hauran, which had been Jewish territory (p. 177); and Rimmon-nirari also had doubtless done much harm in his campaigns (p. 181).

[5] Jareb, here and in chapter x. 6, is with much appearance of reason maintained by Dr. Sayce to be a second name for Sargon as Pul is of Tiglath-pileser. He says the prophecy must belong to the period of two and one-half years between the imprisonment of King Hoshea by Shalmaneser, and the capture of Samaria by Sargon, refering to chapter x. 3, 7, 15. The Shalman in v. 14, he thinks may refer to Shalmaneser, and not to Shalman of Moab. *Bab. and Orient. Record*, ii. 18-22.

[6] Hos. vi. 1-3. [7] Literally, two days. [8] Eichhorn.

as the red of morning—(refreshing and blessed) as the rain, the latter rain, that waters the thirsty earth!'"[1]

The impression made by the prophet's words was unfortunately only passing, and his sorrow breaks out, perhaps on a future occasion, in a touching lament.

"VI. 4. O Ephraim, what shall I do with thee![2] O Judah, what shall I do with thee! Your goodness is like morning clouds, or like early vanishing dew! 5. I have hewn you (as men hew stones) by (the words of) My prophets: I have slain you by the words of My mouth. Now must My (final) judgment on you burst forth (resistless) as the sun. 6. For I delight in goodness, rather than (the) sacrifice (of beasts)! In the knowledge of God more than in burnt-offerings! 7. But you break My covenant like Adam: in this you have been faithless to Me! 8. Gilead is a city of evil-doers, foot printed with blood; 9. gangs of priests, lurking for men, like robbers, murder them on the way to Shechem; yea, they commit lewdness! 10. I see horrible things in Israel. Ephraim goes after impurity; Israel is defiled. 11. To you also, O Judah, is a harvest prepared when I restore the prosperity of My people!"

No details are given in the Historical Books, of the terrible years immediately after the death of Jeroboam II., when anarchy, weakness in the temporary rulers, the haugh-

[1] Hosea vi. 3. "He shall come to us like the heavy winter rain (Geshom), like the latter rain (Malkush), and the former rain (Yoreh), upon the earth." Dr. Chaplin, *Pal. Fund Report*, 1883, p. 12.

The early rain moistens the land and fits it for the reception of seed, and is consequently the signal for the commencement of sowing. Hence it is called the early sign. It begins in October or November.

The heavy winter rain saturates the earth, fills cisterns and pools, and replenishes the springs.

The latter or spring rain fills out the ears of grain, enables them to stand the dry heat of the early summer, and without it the harvest fails.

The rainfall through the different months in which there is any, is, in inches, in Palestine: October, 1.50 in.; November, 5.31 in.; December, 9.04 in.; January, 10.28 in.; February, 10.43 in.; March, 8.51 in.; April, 5.45 in.; May, 1.59 in. Then till October there is a cloudless sky. Thus October has not quite 2 in.; November, 5.50 in.; December, 9 in.; January, 10.25 in.; February, 10.75 in.; March, say 9 in.; April, 5.75 in.; May, 2 in. These results are from the elaborate tables of Dr. Chaplin, taken during a number of years, at Jerusalem.

[2] Hos. vi. 4-11.

tiness of the great, the tumult of factions, and the miseries of the people were bringing the nation to ruin. Kings were raised to the throne to be presently murdered by rivals. Impotent at home, each new ruler sought strength by foreign alliances, if only to deprecate the anger of powers which he could not resist. The throne was the slave of the army; its occupant had to flatter and propitiate it, to keep his place or to save his life. The seventh chapter of our prophet gives us glimpses of this state of things.

"VII. 1. When I heal Israel[1] (now mortally sick, then will the cause of its sad state be shewn, for then will be) seen the misdeeds of Ephraim and the wickedness of Samaria! They are given to treachery; thieves break into the houses; robbers plunder in the streets. 2. They never have it in their thoughts that I, Jehovah, note their iniquity. But now their sins (have grown so great that they) are like witnesses testifying against them; (witnesses that have come) before My face demanding vengeance. 3. (Yet while I glow with anger against all this) the king has pleasure in their wickedness, and the princes in their lies. 4. They are all adulterers; (they glow with lust) as the (fiery) oven heated by the baker, when he ceases to stir the fire, only from the kneading of the dough till it rises.

"5. On the feast day of our king[2] the princes drink themselves to a fever heat with wine; and the king goes with these revellers, hand in hand. 6. Their heart glows like an oven while they lie in wait: through the night their baker sleeps (the leader of their plot); in the morning he kindles a flaming fire (of murder, in them). 7. Then they burn like the heated oven, and consume their rulers; they destroy all their kings without one among them calling upon Me![3]

"8. Ephraim has joined fellowship with the heathen, and is scorched (by war and anarchy), like a cake unturned in the oven. 9. Foreign

[1] Hos. vii. 1–16.

[2] Proof that Hosea belonged to the northern kingdom.

[3] This seems to refer to the murder of Zachariah, and a month later, of Shallum. Menahem succeeded Shallum, and his name may afford, by a play on it, an allusion to him as a baker, while his wrath indeed glowed like an oven. The prophet paints him as heating the oven a little to help on the fermentation of the dough, then he kneads it, and goes to bed, leaving the fire for the time to itself. But in the morning, when the fermentation is completed he makes up a glowing fire to bake. The murder of Shallum and his supporters is alluded to.

peoples devour his strength:[1] yet he does not note it; he is growing old and weak—gray hairs shew here and there on him, yet he does not mark it. 10. I (once) the Pride of Israel, witness (against him) to his face, yet he does not turn to his God, Jehovah; in all his weakness he does not seek Him!

"11. Ephraim has become like a simple foolish dove; he calls on Egypt for help; he turns himself to Assyria. 12. But, turn whither he will, I will spread My net over him; I will bring him down like birds of the air (into its trammels); I will punish him as I have threatened to his tribes! 13. Woe to them! for they have fled from Me; destruction on them! for they have been faithless to Me! I would fain have delivered them, but they speak lies against Me; (saying that I could not do so either now or in the past). 14. They have not cried to Me with their hearts (in silent, earnest prayer), but have howled on their beds for the loss of their corn and wine (by the troubles of the time), and then (slighting Me) have turned to other gods! 15. It was I who in old times trained and strengthened their arm, yet they think only evil against Me! 16. They do not raise their thoughts upwards (to Me); they (pretend to do so, but) are like a deceitful bow, (whose arrow promises what its performance only mocks). Their princes will fall by the sword of Assyria; for the hypocrisy of their tongues towards Me they will be mocked in Egypt, whose favour they seek."[2]

In his earlier utterances Hosea had hinted at the foe destined to carry off Israel, but he distinctly names Assyria in his later appeals, as time disclosed more clearly the purposes of Providence. Now, in the eighth chapter, he sees the invasion and captivity near. Jehovah commands him to sound the alarm:

"VIII. 1. Set the trumpet to your mouth.[3] Jehovah comes

[1] By the tribute paid them.

[2] The fearless denunciations of the great by Hosea, Isaiah, and other prophets, finds a striking counterpart in the words of a Turkish dervish, to the Sultan, quoted by Gesenius, *Iesaia*, vol. i. p. 169: "If you ask who are the robbers and knaves in the land: I tell you they are the officers of government. But the high judges are still more unrighteous than these. As God liveth, they have brought the empire to ruin by their corruption! Fish stink, says the proverb, first, at the head! The cause of public decay may be known by looking, in the same way, at our great men!" Like this Mohammedan dervish, the prophets were in reality the undaunted preachers of the day. See p. 291.

[3] Hos. viii. 1-14.

against Israel, the house of Jehovah, (swift) as an eagle! because they have broken My covenant and been faithless to My Law.

"2. (In that day) they shall cry to Me, 'My God, we know Thee: we are Thy people.' 3. (But I shall answer:) 'Israel has despised the right; pursue him, O enemy!'

"4. They have set up kings without asking My pleasure; they set up princes whom I do not know (Menahem and his chiefs, without consulting the prophets); their silver and gold they have made into (new) idols, as if to secure the destruction of their treasure!

"5. Thy calf, O Samaria (for a new calf idol has been set up in thee), is an abomination to Me; My anger burns against them that worship it. How long will they (continue this wickedness, and not, by

Assyrian Soldiers splitting up and destroying an Idol.

repenting) secure themselves freedom from punishment (at My hand)! 6. For this calf is (the work) of Israel; the founder has made it; it is no god. But the calf of Samaria will be split up into fragments. 7. They have sown the wind and will reap the storm. (A worthless idolatry can wake only worthless hopes.) It is a seed that bears no stalk, its blossom can yield no meal; and if it did, the invader will consume it. 8. Israel shall surely be swallowed up; they are already among the nations like a thing[1] which no one esteems. 9. For they are sending embassies (north) to Assyria; and also to Egypt, like the wild ass, which runs by itself. 10. Ephraim (like the foolish wild ass in its running alone, has, of its own counsel) hired lovers (that is, allies)—even the aid of Assyria, (and has tried to lure that of Egypt). But I

[1] The word is generally translated "vessel" in the A. V., but also—a jewel, an instrument, a thing, a weapon, etc.

will soon bring the nations against him, and he will sorrow for the tribute he has to (pay to Assyria) the king of princes.

"11. For Ephraim has increased the number of sinful altars, and these will bring him to ruin. 12. Though I have written My Law[1] so minutely, he acts as if it did not concern him. 13. They eat the flesh which they offer;[2] but Jehovah has no pleasure in sacrifices like these. He will soon bring their evil deeds to their mind and punish their sins. They shall come anew to a land of oppression like Egypt. 14. Israel has forgotten Me, his Maker, and has built himself idol temples. Even Judah has (distrusted My protection and) built herself fortified towns, but I will send fire into their cities; fire that will burn up their strongholds."

The people of the northern kingdom had their great festival of harvest, at which they gave tithes from their threshing-floors to the idol priests, and held religious rejoicings. But they had little reason for such jubilation. Tiglath-pileser had set out for Palestine, but had turned back now, and Israel breathed freely for the moment.[3]

"IX. 1. Lead up no joyful dances, O Israel,[4] like the nations around, for thou art unfaithful and forsakest thy God; thou hast loved to see the return for the harlot-hire (that is, the worship of thine idols) in the corn on thy threshing-floor. (Thou hast given the praise for it to these idols, not to Me.) 2. But you[5] shall not eat of the corn or drink of the wine-press; the new wine will mock your hope; 3. for you will not remain in Jehovah's land; Ephraim will return to bondage in Egypt, and eat unclean food[6] in Assyria. 4. There, you will pour out no more wine offerings to Jehovah, your sacrifices will not be pleasing to Him; the flour you eat will be like the bread of mourners; to taste it will be to defile yourselves![7] Your bread will serve only to stay your hunger; Jehovah will not allow it to come into His House as an offering. 5. What will ye do then when your yearly feasts come round? What will ye do in your holy festivals? What, in the days of the feasts of

[1] The Mosaic law was thus perfectly known in those days.

[2] Contrary to Exod. xii. 9. [3] 2 Kings xv. 20. [4] Hos. ix. 1.

[5] The Hebrew pronouns change here from the second person singular, to the third person plural. I have substituted the second person plural, as more in harmony with English usage.

[6] Another allusion to the Levitical law.

[7] Deut. xxvi. 14. Jer. xvi. 7 (marg.). Ezek. xxiv. 17.

Jehovah? 6. For when you have gone forth from your ruined land, your Egypt-like oppressor will hold you fast; Memphis (with its thousand graves) will bury you![1] Thistles will grow up in your houses adorned with silver idols! nettles will grow in your homes!

"7. The days of visitation are coming! the days of vengeance approach! Then Israel will see that the people (in whom they trusted, who prophesied safety) were fools, and their (so-called) inspired men, mad! The evil days come for the greatness of thy guilt; for thy bitter persecution of God's servants. 8. Ephraim seeks oracles other than Jehovah; as for His prophet—the net of the fowler is spread (by them) in all his ways; they rage against him even in the house of his God.[2] 9. They have sinned as terribly as they of Gibeah[3] once (when Benjamin was well-nigh destroyed for its guilt); therefore God must needs punish their evil deeds—must visit them for their transgressions."

The tender heart of the prophet, filled with an intense love for his people, pauses here in his accusations and breaks out in a touching retrospect of their history. The love of God to them has been shewn from of old, and He cannot leave them even now, if they will only return to Him at the eleventh hour. Jehovah speaking through Hosea's lips tells them—

"IX. 10. Israel,[4] of old, was to Me like grapes to one in the wilderness; I looked lovingly on your fathers as one looks on the first ripe fig in spring[5]—the sweetest and best of all. But, notwithstanding this, when they came to the land of Baal-peor, they gave themselves up to that shameful god; they became abominable like the idol they loved (and now they continue in their evil ways).

[1] The prophet alludes to the multitudes of Jews who were carried off by slave dealers to Egypt.

[2] They would not listen to his warnings, but turned fiercely against him.

[3] Judg. xix. [4] Hos. ix. 10.

[5] This is illustrated by Isa. xxviii. 4, where the text should be read, "as the early figs, *before the summer*." The "early figs" (Heb. "Bikkurah") form on the wood of the preceding year, and shew themselves even before the leaves open in spring. They are generally ripe by the end of June, but in favoured positions much earlier; in some localities, indeed, by the end of April. Tristram has seen the fruit buds of the fig rapidly swelling as early as the end of February, though the leaves did not unfold for a month later. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 351. The fig harvest is in August; but along the shores of the Sea of Galilee Josephus tells us the ripe fruit could be plucked for ten months in the year. *Bell. Jud.*, III. x. 8.

"11. Ephraim—its might will fly away like a bird; there shall be no births, no bearing in the womb, no conception. 12. If they bring up their sons to manhood, I will make them childless, so that men shall fail: yea, it shall be woe with them when I leave them! 13. (Why, indeed, should they have children,) for I see (in my vision as if) Ephraim (were) exposing his children for a prey, and bringing them forth to the murderer[1] (by his course towards God). 14. Give them, O Jehovah: what wilt Thou give them? Give them a childless womb and dry breasts! 15. Gilgal is the special scene of their wickedness; there have they made themselves hateful to Me. For their wickedness I will drive them out of (Canaan) My house. I will love them no more: all their princes are rebellious (against Me). 16. Ephraim is like a withered tree: its root is dried up: it will bear no fruit; but if it should, I will destroy the loved fruit of the womb.

"17. My God has cast them away, because they hearken not to Him: for this shall they be scattered among the nations."

The tenth chapter forms the opening of a new discourse delivered at another time, but still bearing on the great theme—the corruption of Israel and its imminent punishment.

"X. 1. Israel (under Jeroboam II.) grew to be a luxuriant vine, hanging rich with fruit: but the more its fruit, and the greater its prosperity, the more its altars to false gods: the richer the land, the richer its stately idols. 2. Their heart is divided (between them and God): they will be dealt with as guilty. God Himself will break down their altars, and smite in pieces their images.

"3. Then will they say, 'Jehovah is now no more our King, because we did not fear Him; He is now not our King, but our enemy; what can He help us?'"[2]

[1] Septuagint. The murderer = the Assyrian.
Eichhorn translates the two lines—

"O Ephraim, like yon closely-built Tyre,
I see thee lead forth thy sons to the murderer."

Perhaps an allusion to the human sacrifices of Tyre, which, like Ephraim, worshipped Baal.

Hitzig translates them: "Ephraim, as I saw it (in a vision) is a young palm, set in the open pastures—unprotected so that the flocks and herds devour her leaves and destroy her. She, by her course, is giving her children to the destroyer." He supposes the prophet speaking.

[2] Hos. x. 1, ff. [3] Hitzig.

No wonder that Jehovah has thus forsaken them.

"4. They talk empty words (in their promises to Assyria), they swear false oaths, they make treaties to pay tribute,[1] without intending to keep them; like the rank and poisonous poppy[2] in the furrows of the field, so spring up the seeds of vengeance."

This vengeance will be, that Assyria will not only impoverish the land by the impost it demands, but will carry off even the calves in which Israel trusted for help.

"5. Grieve,[3] O ye inhabitants of Samaria, for the calf of Beth-aven in which ye trusted, (melted down to make up tribute to Tiglath-pileser); the people will lament its loss, the black-robed[4] priests will tremble with sorrow for it, for this their glory has been carried away from them![5] 6. It has been carried off to Assyria as a present to the warlike king. He bears away the shame of Ephraim, and Israel will blush for the counsel it followed. 7. Samaria must perish; (unable to pay the tribute any longer, the Assyrian will invade her), and her king will vanish like a chip carried off by a rushing stream; 8. the high places of Beth-aven will be laid waste; the (scenes of the) guilt of Israel! The thorn and the thistle will grow over their (ruined) altars. (In that day) they will cry to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!'

"9. Thou hast sinned worse, O Israel, than they once did in Gibeah,[6] yet at that time thou didst escape; the war did not then bring destruction on thee. But (when I will to do so) I will chastise thee, I will gather against thee strange nations, and send thee into captivity with thy two idol calves (thy two sins! bound on thee, like a load on a beast of burden)."

A new train of thought is now begun. The victories under Jeroboam II. are compared to the threshing of corn by cattle on the threshing-floors.

[1] Menahem's engagement to pay tribute to Assyria. 2 Kings xvi. 7; xvii. 3.

[2] Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 447.

[3] Hos. x. 5.

[4] Kemarim. "Black-robed" idol priests. The word occurs also in 2 Kings xxiii 5; Zeph. i. 4. The verb from which it is derived is translated "black" in Lam v. 10.

[5] Plural in the Hebrew, but the singular is used in the rest of the verse.

[6] Judg. xix.

"11. Ephraim is an unmuzzled cow well trained for the threshing-floor, that had pleasure in treading out the corn, being free to eat of it at her task: but I will lay a yoke on her fair neck: I will make her do slavish field work; Judah shall have to plough; Jacob-Israel, break the clods.' 12. (If you wish to see better days), sow for yourselves righteousness; ye shall then reap mercy! Break up your fallow-ground and sow it thus (that is, change your ways), for it is high time to seek after Jehovah, that He may come and rain down blessing upon you."

But they would not listen.

"13. Instead of doing this ye have ploughed-in seed of wickedness, and have reaped iniquity and eaten the fruit of lies. Because thou hast trusted in thy chariots[2] and in the number of thy mighty men, 14. the shout of war shall rise amongst thy people, and all thy strong places shall be destroyed, as Shalman laid waste Beth-arbel in the day of battle,[3] when the mother was dashed from the walls after her children! Such things will your passing wickedness at Bethel bring upon you; before you dream of it the king of Israel shall utterly perish."[4]

But denunciation and sternness are alien to the heart of Jehovah. He cannot utterly destroy Israel, which he loved of old, and still loves with an inextinguishable pity, notwithstanding all its sins. He will yet shew mercy on them and compassionate their sorrows.

"XI. 1. When Israel was a child,[5] says God, I loved him and called him out of Egypt to be My son. 2. But the more I called him (by My

[1] They will be reduced to slavery.

[2] Eichhorn and Ewald, after Septuagint.

[3] Beth-arbel was apparently near Pella, east of the Jordan. Shalmaneser III., of Assyria (781-772), marched against the cedar district of Lebanon in 775 and against Damascus in 773, and might on either of these campaigns have swooped down on the lands east of the Jordan. But there was also in Hosea's day, a King Salman, of Moab, tributary to Pul of Assyria. Crushed by Jeroboam II., he may very probably have risen in revolt after the death of that king and overrun Gilead and Bashan, destroying Beth-arbel among other places. The incident would in this case have been the more impressive to the prophet's audience from having happened so recently. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 282-4. Oliphant's *Land of Gilead*, p. 106.

[4] This was fulfilled in the case of King Hoshea.

[5] Hosea xi.

prophets), the farther he wandered from Me. They offered sacrifices to Baal; incense to their graven images.

"3. Yet I, even I, taught Israel his first steps; I nursed him in My arms. But he did not care to know that it was I who healed (him after his sufferings as a slave) and made him strong.[1] 4. I led him through the wilderness with gentle bands, with bands of love: I softly raised them from off his mouth,[2] and tenderly laid food before him. 5. He shall not indeed return to Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king. Because (after they had forsaken Me) they refused to return. 6. The sword shall whirl in his cities, it shall hew down his chief men, and devour and consume the multitude, because of the course they have followed. 7. For my people are bent on backsliding from Me; the prophets have called them to seek the Most High, but not one raises his soul to Him.

"8. Yet, how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim? How shall I abandon thee, O Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah?[3] How shall I destroy thee like Zeboim?[3] My heart within Me is turned towards thee; My pity is awakened. 9. I will *not* carry out the heat of My wrath, I will not utterly destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not man. I, who dwell in the midst of thee, am holy, and I will not enter[4] into your city (to overthrow it for ever)."

Israel would not be finally destroyed, but sent into captivity, for their good, that God might hereafter bring them back.

"10. They shall (one day) walk after Jehovah when He calls them with a great voice like that of a lion (for with such a loud sounding voice He shall call them). Then will His sons (once more faithful) hasten from the (islands of the) west; 11. hasten, swift as a bird, from Egypt, and as a swift dove from Assyria, and I will again place them in their homes. Jehovah hath said it!"

The twelfth chapter presents us with another of Hosea's orations. Like some of the preceding it takes the form of sad and faithful reproof.

[1] Eichhorn.

[2] Hosea reverts to the common figure of an ox used in the field.

[3] Two of the cities of the plain destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. *Hosea must have known the record in Genesis.*

[4] "Come in fury." Ewald. Keil. Wünsche.

"12. Ephraim has compassed me about with lies;[1] the House of Israel has compassed me with deceit: and Judah is yet defiant towards God; towards the Holy One, who is faithful.

"XII. 1. Ephraim grasps after the wind, and all day long his falsehood and deceit increase, and he runs after the deadly east wind. He makes treaties with Assyria, and (at the same moment) sends oil[2] by his embassies (as a gift) to (the king of) Egypt.[3] Jehovah has a controversy[4] also with Judah, and will visit Jacob, (that is, both north and south,) according to his deeds; He will punish him according to his doings. 3. In the womb he took his brother by the heel; in his manhood he strove with God. 4. yea, he strove with the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication to him. At Bethel he found Him, and there He spoke with us; 5. Jehovah, the God of Hosts, Jehovah, is His name. 6. Turn thou, therefore, O Jacob, to thy God; practise mercy and right, and wait on thy God continually."

The wealth of Phœnicia had been gained by trade, but its people had a terrible name for lying and unfairness in their dealing. They could, therefore, be justly accused, and deserved to suffer. Israel in Jeroboam II.'s day had also risen to wealth and power, but they maintained that their prosperity was from God and drew with it no reproach.

"7. The Canaanite deals with false balances: he delights in roguery. 8. But Ephraim boasts (as compared with him) that he, also, 'has grown rich and has gained wealth; but that all his strivings for gain have been honest, without guilt (which might bring punishment after')."

Jehovah challenges this; and though they say they are not guilty, will surely punish them.

"9. Yet I, Jehovah (whom thou slightest), thy God since thou

[1] Hos. xi. 12; xii. 6.

[2] Oil was the most highly esteemed product of the land, and thus worthy to be sent to the king of Egypt. No doubt a large quantity was forwarded. Menahem, an Assyrian vassal, afraid of Egypt, which was both dangerous and near, tried to keep on good terms with it as well as with Assyria, its fierce enemy. Perhaps, indeed, he sought its help, conditionally, against Assyria.

[3] Properly, a "charge against."

[4] Hos. xii. 7.

leftest Egypt (ages ago), will drive thee forth (from thy wasted land) to dwell again in tents [1] (as thou still dost, for thy pleasure) in the days of the feast of Tabernacles. 10. I have warned you by the prophets; I have made one vision follow another; I have used vivid words through the prophets (to turn you back to Me). 11. If Gilead has given itself to the nothingness of idols it will surely be brought to nothing. They sacrifice bullocks at Gilgal, and therefore will their altars be overthrown and become like heaps of stone, over the furrows of the field."

The past history of Israel shews how, even in the darkest hour, God had cared for it.

"12. Jacob fled to the plains of Aram,[2] Israel served (Laban as a slave there) for a wife; for a wife he tended sheep: (yet God watched and guarded him with loving care). 13. By a prophet—Moses—Jehovah led Israel forth from Egypt, by a prophet He preserved him (in the wilderness). 14. But Ephraim has provoked God to bitter wrath; therefore shall Jehovah leave him to his blood-guiltiness: his Lord shall avenge the dishonour done to Himself."

The next discourse points once more to the idolatry of Israel as its ruin.[3]

"XIII. 1. When Ephraim spoke (of old) there was trembling (in the peoples round), and he raised himself to glory as a separate kingdom. But since he went aside to Baal his might is gone. 2. Yet, still, they sin more and more; they make molten images of their silver; idols, only the work of craftsmen, according to their skill. Of these the priests who offer men as sacrifices (to Moloch) say, let them also kiss the calves.[4] 3. Therefore shall they be like the morning cloud and like the dew which vanishes in the early hours,[5] like chaff driven by the stormy wind from the threshing-floor; like smoke blown away from the open window.[6] 4. Yet I am Jehovah, thy God; (since the day when I led thee) from Egypt (hither) thou knowest no (mighty) God but Me, for there is no (true) Saviour beside Me. 5. I knew thee in the wilder-

[1] Will cast them out of their settled homes.
[2] Hos. xii. 12.
[3] Hos. xiii. 1-8.
[4] Some think men were sacrificed to the calves.
[5] See p. 372.
[6] The Hebrews had no chimneys. The smoke found its way out at the windows and the door.

ness: in the land of glowing heat. 6. When thou wast filled with the rich pasture thou wast satisfied (and thy heart waxed proud); therefore thou hast forgotten Me.

"7. But now I am become to thee like a lion; I lurk in the way for thee like a leopard:[1] 8. like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will seize thee; I will tear open the caul of thy heart: I will devour thee like a hungry lioness; the wild beast of the field will tear thee in pieces."[2]

After this outburst of Divine indignation, the tenderness of the prophet again bursts forth. His very sternness is the utterance of love. The God whose they are still, yearns for them, and cannot let them perish.

"9. O Israel,[3] it has been thy destruction that (thou hast set thyself) against Me, thy (only) Help! 10. Where is now thy King,[4] that he may save thee in all thy cities? Where are thy Judges, of whom thou saidst, 'Give me a King and Princes'? 11. I have (once and again) given thee a king in my wrath and taken him from thee in mine anger. 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is (recorded) sealed up, and preserved (in the archives of God). 13. The sorrows of a travailing woman come on him; he is a foolish son, he comes not forth from his sins in this the moment when (spiritual) birth is nigh.[5] 14. (If he did,) I would save him from the hand of the grave, I would redeem him from death! (Then would he say,) O death, where are thy plagues! O grave, where is thy destruction!

"But (as he will not repent) pity shall be hid from Mine eyes!

"15. (Though he boast of his power and greatness,) and bears fruit among his brethren, (the other tribes, for his very name means 'the doubly fruitful,') the east wind will come, the wind of Jehovah[6] (and shall blow) from the wilderness, and dry up his brooks, and sand up his springs. The Assyrian will plunder your treasure chambers of all their rich store; 16. (and in that day) Samaria will pay the penalty for having rebelled against her God: she will fall by the sword: her children shall be dashed in pieces; her matrons ripped open!"

[1] The leopard was formerly common in the Holy Land. Thus we have Beth Nimrah, "the house of the leopard," in the tribe of Gad. Num. xxxii. 3.

[2] The plural pronoun is used in the Hebrew, but the singular is continued to suit the English idiom.

[3] Hos. xiii. 9–16.

[4] Perhaps spoken after King Hoshea had been taken prisoner and carried off, with many of his chief men.

[5] A paraphrase of the text.

[6] The Assyrian.

The close of the prophet's appeals is near, but he cannot end without one more attempt to win back his people to God:

"XIV. 1. O Israel, return to Jehovah, thy God;[1] for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2. Take with you words, and turn to Jehovah; say to him: 'Forgive all our sin, and receive us graciously; that we may offer, in thanks (like sacrifices of bullocks), the gratitude of our lips. 3. Asshur shall not, henceforth, be our reliance; we will not trust to the horses (of Egypt),[2] we will no more say to the work of our hands, "Ye are our gods;" O Thou, in whom, alone, the fatherless[3] findeth mercy!'"

Then shall the answer come from Him who waits to be gracious and delighteth to forgive:

"4. I will heal their backsliding,[4] I will love them freely; for My anger is turned away from him. 5. I will be like the dew unto Israel; he shall grow like the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6. His branches shall spread; his beauty shall be like the olive-tree; his smell as Lebanon. 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall again have crops of corn, and flourish like the vine; they shall be famous as the perfume of the wine of Lebanon. 8. Say, O Ephraim, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' Then will I, Jehovah, say, 'I have heard and observed thee—I shall be to thee as an ever green fig-tree;[5] from me is thy fruit found.'"

. . . . . .

The prophet, in conclusion, asks:

"Who is wise, so as to understand this?[6] Prudent, that he may know it? For the ways of Jehovah are right; the just walk in them (safely), but the wicked shall stumble therein."

Such was the language in which the inspired preacher spoke to the people of Samaria and Israel more than 2,600

[1] Hos. xiv. 1–3.

[2] Egypt was famous for its cavalry.

[3] Israel felt itself fatherless now, and pleaded for God to become its Father once more.

[4] Hos. xiv. 4–8.

[5] Vulgate = fir. Septuagint = juniper bush. German = fir. Hebrew = cypress. (With the cedar, the glory of Lebanon.) Noyes has "olive-tree." Eichhorn, "fig-tree." The fig-tree appears more suitable for fruit suited for food.

[6] Hos. xiv. 9.

years ago. The deepest emotion, the intensest earnestness breathe in every word. He is moved, here, to the tenderest pathos at the prospect of the ruin of his country; there he bravely denounces its sins, with no regard to his personal interests or safety. The profoundest confidence alike in the promises and the threatenings of God glows in every utterance. Nor can there be a more touching enforcement of the quenchless and all-patient love of Jehovah to His people than these discourses present. The most striking figures are used to embody this pervading thought. God is the Husband of Israel and loves her even after her unfaithfulness: brings her back by tender words, and longs for her love to return, that He may pour forth His own love to her again. Even the awful glory of the Divine holiness, which threatens to consume the sinful nation, is only the splendour of eternal benevolence. The God, who loves so deeply, demands to be alone adored. Wrath may burn for a time, but infinite pity, amidst all, anticipates the time when the unfaithful one will come back and make it possible to shed on her the abiding sunshine of heavenly favour.

CHAPTER X.

THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

Tiglath-pileser II., the Pul of the Bible, proved one of the most warlike of the later Assyrian kings. His annals shew that he accompanied his armies in person to the wild mountains of Georgia and the Caspian Sea on the north; to the banks of the Indus on the east; and to the frontiers of Egypt, and the wastes of the Sinai Peninsula on the west and south. The chronicles of this fierce conqueror's reign, inscribed in his lifetime on a long series of alabaster tablets, which lined the inner walls of his palace at Calah, a district of Nineveh, have unfortunately in great measure perished. The splendid building which contained them was dismantled in the century after him by Esarhaddon, and the historical slabs carried off for a new palace, and set up in it, after the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser II. had been effaced. Hence, only fragments of some, mutilated and left behind in the removal, have been found, giving a few glimpses of the Great King's rule. From these and from ancient sources, however, we find that Tiglath-pileser, after seizing the throne, to which he had apparently no legitimate title, and securing peace round Nineveh, set out in his first year, 745, against Babylon and Lower Chaldæa—the one, hated as the ancient rival of his capital; the other as the native land of an energetic and warlike race, whom he could not break into submission, and which was destined, as it proved, to

make Babylon its own in the end, and to give its own name, Chaldæans, to the population of Babylonia, founding at last an empire on the Euphrates before which Nineveh itself was to fall, and as the refuge of Assyrian patriots or rebels. Ever victorious, he left a titular king at Babylon, and caught and crucified the prince of Chaldæa,[1] ending the campaign by causing himself to be proclaimed "king of the Sumirs and of Akkad," in Babylon itself. The year 744 also was spent in the east,[2] but in 743 he marched against Arpad in Syria, now Tel Erfad, north of Aleppo, which held out against him, however, for three years, and did not fall till 740. He likewise received tribute from Tyre, Byblos, the Island of Rhodes,[3] and the Hittite kingdom of Hamath, on the Orontes. Like his predecessors, he stamped out resistance with savage ferocity. He boasts of the multitudes killed in battle, or impaled when taken; of the pyramids of bodies he raised at the gates of cities he was besieging; of the desolation he made where these cities once stood, and of the throngs of prisoners of all ages and both sexes, whom he led into captivity and slavery, with all their possessions and their dishonoured gods.[4] A grand durbar to receive the homage of the tributary kings, far and near, having been held at Arpad,[5] he returned to the Euphrates, carrying off as many of the still surviving population as he had been able to seize.

Since the long past times of David, there had always been a friendly relation between Judah and Hamath, which is a branch of the great Hittite race, and was an influential power in Northern Syria. The kingdom of Damascus had always been a common enemy to both, lying, as it did, dangerously

[1] *Keilinschriften*, p. 128. [2] *Keilinschriften*, p. 140.
[3] This name is doubtful. [4] Menant, pp. 137–148. [5] *Keilinschriften*, p. 141.

near each. When, therefore, Hadadezer, the king of Syria in David's life, had been crushed by the Jewish king, the king of Hamath of the day—Toi by name—had eagerly allied himself with the conqueror; but this relation was broken off under Solomon, with the result that, while Hamath remained, as a city, independent, the great plain Bekaa, or Cœle Syria, became a province of Judah, so that Solomon could build store cities in it, and a summer palace on the neighbouring glorious heights of Lebanon. Jeroboam II., in the wide conquests by which, for the time, he made the northern kingdom glorious, incorporated this rich tract into his dominions; but the remembrance of its old connection with Judah still lingered, for it is spoken of in the notice of his annexing it, as the (portion of) Hamath (once) belonging to Judah—an expression used also of a part of the kingdom of Damascus which also he then added to his realm.[1]

It was natural then, now, when the northern kingdom was already tributary to Tiglath-pileser, and Hamath, with the other Hittite kingdoms, was in imminent peril, that Uzziah, or Azariah, as he was generally called, should remember the past, and shew himself ready to support a State so associated of old with Judah. It is quite in keeping with what might have been expected, then, to find from the Assyrian monuments, that the Jewish king allied himself with the "rebels" of Hamath, and that nineteen districts had "in their wickedness plotted with him." Now, however, in 739, it felt the weight of his arm. Its people were swept off in large numbers to the Tigris, and an Assyrian governor set over those left behind. The terror of these victories spread on every hand and secured the trembling submission

[1] 2 Kings xiv. 28.

of many local rulers. Another great durbar, to receive their homage and tribute, was held, we do not know where, in the following year, 738. A list still remains of seventeen of the royal personages, who appeared, either in person or by deputy; doubtless with lavish pomp and display.

Among these we find Rezin of Damascus, Hiram of Tyre, the kings of Byblos on the coast, of Carchemish on the Euphrates; the princes of Armenia; a queen from Arabia, and Menahem of Samaria. With a kingdom in anarchy, the latter could not resist Tiglath-pileser, and prudently submitted to the payment of 1,000 talents of silver, equal to £375,000[1] English money, but worth in purchasing value perhaps twenty times as much. So enormous a sum was beyond the power of Menahem to defray from his ordinary revenues, but the rich men of his kingdom were made to feel the first pinch on their ill-gotten wealth[2] by having to contribute a forced loan to the king of fifty shekels of silver[3] each. Yet this expenditure, though great, was well repaid by Tiglath, in return for it, confirming Menahem in his kingdom; an engagement which secured the active support of Assyria if he were attacked.

It is curious to notice that in the Book of Kings the tribute is said to have been paid to Pul, the original name of Tiglath-pileser, still used in foreign nations, not yet accustomed to his title. In the same way in a list of Babylonian kings, from B.C. 747 to the time of Alexander the Great, Tiglath-pileser, who was king of Babylon as well

[1] *Keilinschriften*, p. 199.

[2] There were 3,000 shekels of silver in a talent, so that the payment of 1,000 talents by contributions of 50 shekels would require 60,000 contributors. This shews the number of rich men in the northern kingdom to have been still large. The shekel was apparently equal to 2*s.* 6*d.*, so that each had to give, nominally, £6 5*s.*; equal in reality to, perhaps, over £120.

[3] 2 Kings xv. 20.

as of Assyria, is called Porus or Por, the Persian form of Pul.

Uzziah, or Uzzi-Jahn, "My strength is Jehovah," does not appear on the list of tributaries. Vigorous and powerful, he doubtless reckoned on the support of the countries dependent on himself, and therefore omitted in the records of Assyrian feudatories of the day—the Philistines, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and others.[1] Egypt, moreover, was always in the background, as a possible ally of any nation of Palestine against the Great King; promising them help if attacked, and in many cases instigating their rebellion, in the hopes of keeping Assyria at a distance from the Nile, which it eagerly coveted. Palestine, indeed, was to the Pharaohs, in respect to the invader from the Euphrates, what Afghanistan is to Great Britain in relation to Russian advances in the East.

Not caring to attack Judah under such a king as Uzziah, with, perhaps, the aid of Egypt, if needed, Tiglath-pileser returned to Nineveh without attempting more than the destruction of the league with Hamath.

From 737 to 735 the affairs of Armenia and Chaldæa again occupied him, but in 734 he returned to Palestine, where Menahem had died, leaving his crown to his son Pekahiah. The lawlessness of the past, however, broke out afresh in Israel, as soon as the hand of a vigorous ruler like Menahem was removed. The army had raised him to the throne, and asserted its power only too successfully against his successor. Two years had hardly passed when a conspiracy to effect a revolution was formed by Pekah, the officer in command of the king's bodyguard. Supported by

[1] *Keilinschriften*, p. 143. In 1 Kings xv. 18, Hezion is probably a copyist's error for Rezin, which, however, should be Rezon, the true form of the name.

his troop, consisting apparently of about four hundred men,[1] including many from Gilead, his own district, Pekah, aided by fifty of them, succeeded in murdering the king while in his harem. Uzziah was still nominally reigning in Judah, but had associated Jotham, his son, with him in the government, from the time of his attack of leprosy. His death, however, shortly after the beginning of Pekah's reign, left Jotham the contemporary of that ruler for his succeeding years.

Able and energetic, Pekah was perhaps the only man in the kingdom able to ward off its fall for a time. He had seized the crown while Pul, that is, Tiglath-pileser, was engaged in Armenia and Chaldæa in the years 737 to 735, and soon shewed signs of resistance to Assyria, joining with Rezin of Damascus in an attempt to induce Jotham of Judah to join a new league against Pul, and, on his refusal, they had revenged themselves by raids into his territory, to force him into their alliance.[2] On his death, the weak Ahaz, his son, continued his neutrality and was subjected to still greater affronts. A combined army of Syrians and Israelites invaded Judah, for Pekah did not shrink even from an unpatriotic alliance with the hereditary foe of his race, to support his throne and crush his brethren of the southern kingdom, among whom he was meanly aided by a disaffected party in Jerusalem itself.[3] This confederacy, resolved to force Judah to support them, and being unable to win over Ahaz to their side, had actually plotted to dethrone him and set up in his place a creature of their own —the son of Jabeel, apparently, from his name, a Syrian. Pekah and Rezin, no longer timid now that they had no longer to fear the vigour of Uzziah or Jotham, boldly

[1] Septuagint. [2] 2 Kings xv. 37. [3] Isa. vii. 6.

wasted the country, to the very gates of Jerusalem.[1] The army which had done so much under Uzziah and Jotham was shamefully defeated, and vast numbers of men, women, and children carried off as slaves to Damascus and Samaria, with an enormous booty. But a fraternal feeling still lingered in the bosoms of the northern tribes, and a prophet, otherwise unknown, used it skilfully on behalf of the captives. Pleading for them as of the same race, and impressing on the people of Samaria their guilt in thus enslaving their brethren, he succeeded in securing their peaceful restoration to Judah.[2] But the people of Judah stood true to the House of David even when represented by so weak and unworthy a prince as Ahaz, and it was clear that the son of Jabeel would never reign in Jerusalem, unless forced on the little nation by war. Yet the discontented party in the city, and disasters in the field, made the position of the king desperate. His forces had been beaten, the Syrians had marched to the far south of the territory of Judah, wresting from it the one port it had—Elath, on the Gulf of Akabah, on the east side of the Peninsula of Sinai, and the Philistines had found an opportunity in the troubled state of affairs, to seize a number of the Jewish towns near them. In the striking words of Chronicles, "Jehovah brought Judah low, because of Ahaz; for he had caused licentiousness in Judah, and trespassed sore against Jehovah."[3]

Under these circumstances, Ahaz hastened to seek the help of the Great King, by becoming his tributary;[4] a step which forced Pekah to do the same, so as to save himself, if possible, for the time, from invasion.

The Assyrian king was more than willing to act on this

[1] Isa. vii. 1.
[2] 2 Chron. xxviii. 5–15.
[3] 2 Chron. xxviii. 17–19.
[4] 2 Chron. xxviii. 16.

invitation from Judah, for it gave him the pretext he had long wished, to make himself felt in the politics of Southern Palestine. The great Hittite fortress of Carchemish on the Euphrates, dangerous to him, if the road to it from Egypt lay open, could now be left without anxiety in his rear, since he had, in Jerusalem, an ally barring the way against any attack from Egypt, in aid of the Hittite and other princes of Syria, whom he intended forthwith to crush, and opening the way, moreover, for his own march into the Nile valley. It was in vain that Isaiah did his utmost to stop the king from a course so fatal. He was making that easy to Tiglath-pileser, which would otherwise have been slow and difficult to carry out, and he was bartering away the independence of his kingdom, which would henceforth be only a vassal of Nineveh, to be treated as a rebel, if it should refuse, at any time in the future, to pay the burdens imposed on it by its foreign master. Still more, urged Isaiah—when Damascus and Samaria had been crushed, it would be the fate of Judah to be crushed in the same way. Ahaz was too much alarmed to reason.

At once, therefore, in 734, the Assyrian armies set out on their march to the territories of Damascus. Terrified at their approach, Rezin and Pekah precipitately retreated from Judah and prepared to defend themselves; but at the first battle Rezin was utterly defeated; his captains made prisoners and impaled, his chariots destroyed; the horses of the cavalry captured; the archers, spearmen, and shield-bearing corps, indeed the whole army, scattered or taken. Rezin fled, alone, "like a deer," from the battle-field, to save his life, and threw himself into Damascus, trusting to its massive walls to defend him. Thither Pul at once advanced, shutting him up, as he tells us, like a caged

bird. But the fortifications were too strong for a sudden attack, and, after cutting down all the trees round the city for siege purposes, and crucifying the chief prisoners he had captured, the Great King himself marched off to devastate the neighbouring country, leaving a sufficient force to maintain the investment of Damascus. Sixteen districts round the Syrian capital were laid waste; men, women, children, flocks, herds, and all the property of the inhabitants being carried off. The whole kingdom of Rezin, indeed, was subdued, Damascus alone excepted. It still held out.[1]

The catastrophe predicted by successive prophets,[2] now burst upon the northern kingdom. The words of Amos had already come true. The haughty oppressors of their poorer countrymen were stripped and humbled.

The territory on the east of the Jordan had now indisputably gained the foremost place in the kingdom, for Pekah was born in Gilead, and his supporters in the royal guard, in seizing the throne, were men of his clan. The names of two of them, indeed, which survive, carry us back to the trans-Jordanic history of the times of Joshua and David; Argob, perhaps the chief of the wild lava district of the same name, in Western Manasseh, and Arieh, the lion-like, reminding us of the Gadite chiefs, "with faces like the faces of lions," who swam the Jordan when it was in flood, to join the son of Jesse. But while the boast of having given a king to the tribes ran through all the glens and valleys of Reuben, Gad, and Eastern Manasseh, the hour had struck for the punishment of their sins. The land was full of "evil-doers; polluted with blood."[3] The curse of

[1] Schrader, *Keilinschriften*, p. 153.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[3] Hos. vi. 1; vi. 8; xii. 11.

God had been denounced by His prophet on its idolatry and degeneracy, and was now permitted to descend. Nor was it alone in its calamities. The hills of Upper Galilee as well as the glades of Gilead echoed the tread of the Assyrian battalions. The town of Ijon, in Naphtali,[1] twenty miles north of Lake Merom; of Janoah, also in the mountains of that tribe: of Kadesh, five miles west of Lake Merom; of Hazer, close by Kadesh, were taken, among others, and as many of their inhabitants as had not succeeded in fleeing from the enemy, were led off in long trains, to captivity, in Assyria. The whole of Upper Galilee, indeed, was swept as by a net. The smoke of burning villages darkened the air. The mountain caves were filled with pale multitudes who had hidden in them for their lives, till the flood of invasion rolled past. Across the Jordan, the rich meadows and wooded hills of Gilead saw the population hurrying, amidst loud wails, from the advancing foe; leaving behind all their wealth, as his prey. Yet vast numbers were taken, and added to the dismal columns of prisoners, to be marched to the Euphrates. Nearly half of the wide territory of Israel was finally torn from it. Other races than the chosen people were soon brought to repeople the solitudes. "The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea—the district towards the Mediterranean—Galilee of the heathen, and the country beyond Jordan saw grievous affliction."[2] Samaria itself was forced to pay a tribute of ten talents of gold, 1,000 talents of silver, and other penalties not now legible on the annals. "All this," says Pul, "I carried off to Assyria. The districts belonging to Gilead, Abel (Beth Maachah), and others," he adds, "on the east of the land of the House of Omri—far off and near, I

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1. See p. 41.

[2] Isa. ix. 1.

joined, in their whole extent, to Assyria, and set my prefects over them." The cities round Samaria, and many places west of the Jordan, were also attacked; Samaria alone, like Damascus, rising, as yet, above the flood of victorious invasion. There Pekah took refuge, saving his throne for the moment, by humble submission, but Assyrian officials were set over the territory torn from him.[1]

Damascus, now stripped of its allies and left isolated, was next attacked, but resisted bravely, succumbing only after a tedious siege during the years 733 and 732.[2] But its fall, at last, was terrible. "I beheaded Rezin," says Pul, in his annals; "I besieged and took the palace of Benhadad, his father, built on a high mountain. Eight thousand of the citizens, with their goods, I carried off into captivity. Five hundred and eighteen towns of sixteen districts of the kingdom of Damascus I reduced to ashes."[3] The Bible adds that the population was led to Kir, which Josephus thinks was in Media, but others place in Armenia or even in Southern Babylonia. The great Syrian king, so long the embittered enemy of Israel, was at last vanishing from among the powers of the world.

The Philistines next drew on themselves the wrath of the conqueror. They had apparently fought against Judah, as allies of Syria and Israel. Hanno, king of Gaza, fled to Egypt at the approach of the Assyrians, but the city was plundered, and its gods borne off; Pul raising in it his own statue as a token of his conquest.[4] Ekron and Ashdod also fell, and the king of Askelon destroyed himself, to escape a

[1] Schrader, p. 145.

[2] Schrader, p. 153. Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 83-85. The inconceivable sufferings caused by an Assyrian invasion may be in part realized by the record left of the cruelties of King Assur-Nazir-Pal about 150 years before, in his Mesopotamian wars. See vol. ii. pp. 449, 450. [3] Schrader, p. 149. 2 Kings xv. 29. [4] Schrader, p. 145.

death of torture from the enemy. "Hanno, of Gaza," says the Great King, "fled before my troops, and escaped to Egypt. I took Gaza, and carried off its spoil and its gods, and erected my royal image in it." The same is also recorded of other places, whose names are lost. Imposing a heavy tribute on these cities, Pul crossed the Negeb to Edom, the stronghold of the fiercest enemy of Ahaz, and after subduing it, turned his arms against the queen of an Arab kingdom still farther south. She, like the other local rulers, had been a member of the Syrian league; but multitudes of her people were now carried off, with 30,000 camels and 20,000 oxen. Even Lower Egypt, long torn by intestine wars, forthwith sent an embassy to Pul, and a vassal king was set over it. Moab and Ammon, which lay on his way back to Damascus, were the last conquests of this great campaign.

Returning triumphantly from it, the Great King had the satisfaction of seeing the fall of the Syrian capital, in 732, after a siege of nearly two years. Rezin having been put to death, and vast multitudes of the people sent off to Kir, Pul celebrated this crowning victory by holding a great court or durbar in Rezin's palace in Damascus. The subject princes from far and near were required to honour this with their attendance, to flatter the glory of their master. They came, therefore, from every part, doubtless in great state, bringing the costliest gifts and tribute their ruined countries could yield. Among others, the princes of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Hamath, and the Philistine cities, assembled, with many more.[1] The name of Pekah of Samaria is not on the list, which is unfortunately mutilated, but that of Ahaz is given. Taking with him all the gold he could

[1] Schrader, 147.

gather from the treasuries of the temple and his own exchequer and those of the royal family, he appeared with the other tributaries.[1] His name, from the Assyrian inscriptions, proves to have been really *Jeho*ahaz, now deprived of the sacred prefix which formed its first part, and entered in the Jewish Scriptures only as Ahaz, no doubt from the hatefully irreligious character of the king. The divine name could not be associated with such an idolater. It is curious to find that among other princes at the great gathering, was a Solomon, of Moab. It was at this time that Ahaz saw, in Damascus, the altar of which he sent a pattern to the high priest Urijah, at Jerusalem, ordering that a similar one should be set up in the court of the temple, to be inaugurated, on his return, by a solemn sacrifice offered, apparently by Ahaz in person, to commemorate the "peace with honour" which he had made with Assyria. It was probably now, also, that he got the hint of the "sun-dial" which he raised in Jerusalem, and it is very possible that his intercourse with the Assyrian court-circle may have led to the introduction into Judah of the literary zeal so marked among the Assyrians. We know, at least, that before long scribes were employed in Jerusalem to copy and edit ancient writings, just as a similar class laboured on the same tasks in the Assyrian and Babylonian libraries.[2]

While all this misery was wasting the land north and south, an Assyrian general, or Rabshakeh, had been besieging Tyre, which at last fell in 732, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, nominally equal to £400,000 English money, but then worth many times more in purchasing value. In 731 Pul was fighting in Babylonia, and having once more conquered it, proclaimed himself its king, forcing

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 10, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 21, 24. [2] Prov. xxv. 1.

Merodach Baladan I., who had claimed the throne, to do homage to him as king of South Chaldæa. Samaria now met its doom. The finely-woven policy of Pekah had been scattered to the winds by the destruction, one after another, of all the members of the league against Judah, and he now found himself left to meet the Assyrian, with no outside help to support him. The strong city in which he had trusted, rising from its hill-encircled plain, like a boss from the centre of a shield, fell before the irresistible conqueror, and Pekah was forthwith executed, no doubt with every circumstance of torture, the Great King himself ordering his death; Hoshea, the son of Elath, whom Tiglath-pileser appointed the new vassal-king, being required to see the command carried out.[1]

How long Pekah reigned is not known, for it seems necessary to shorten by one half the period of twenty years assigned to him, as well as to lower the date; five different Assyrian and Greek authorities making it impossible to harmonize the chronology without these modifications. It was in 729 that his reign as an Assyrian vassal came to a sudden close at Samaria; but the reign of Pul was also near its end. The year 728 saw the death of Ahaz and the accession of Hezekiah in Judah, and in the next year, 727, the career of the Assyrian conqueror was over. So short a time had changed the chief actors in the great drama, in Assyria, Samaria, and Jerusalem! The Assyrian empire now stretched from Persia to Egypt, a distance of 1,200 miles, and from the Persian Gulf to Armenia, a distance of 800 miles. It was fast reaching the period of its greatest glory.

Hoshea, whom Pul accepted as the vassal king over the

[1] 2 Kings xv. 30.

now shrunken territory of Israel, was apparently a man of a nobler stamp. The payment of the heavy tribute demanded by the king of Assyria[1] galled a people which had fancied itself the first of the nations,[2] and their new king, either from necessity or sympathy, took the popular side, and adopted a policy followed afterwards, to some extent, by Judah also, to explain which will enable us to understand the circumstances of the time. Egypt had been once mistress not only of Palestine, but of all Western Asia, as far, at least, as the Euphrates to the east, and the Gulf of Antioch on the north. But this had passed away shortly after the death of Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the Oppression, whose dynasty fell after his son Menephtah's troubled reign, to be followed by the twentieth, which comprised only one king, Rameses III. After him the priests of Tanis succeeded in founding a dynasty, before which the survivors of the native kings fled to the far south, beyond Egypt, where they set up a kingdom, at Napata, under the shadow of the Holy Mountain—the modern Gebel Barkel—in all respects the counterpart of the old kingdom of Egypt.

Since the time of Shishak, the founder of the dynasty known as the twenty-second,[3] Egypt had been agitated and weakened by internal disputes and wars. That king had united the whole country under his sceptre and had been able to invade Judæa with a resistless army in Rehoboam's day. His successors, however, confined themselves to their domestic affairs, cultivating the arts of peace, and averse to

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 3.

[2] *Keilinschriften*, 145.

[3] Brugsch holds that this dynasty was of Asiatic origin; but his theory of its being Assyrian in any political sense is questioned. Lenormant says that Shishak was the descendant of a Syrian, or, perhaps, Assyrio Babylonian adventurer, who had come to Egypt during the twentieth dynasty. In the fifth generation from him Shishak made his way to the throne, subduing the petty kings and chiefs by whom the Nile valley had long been held. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 339.

war and conquest, so that little is known of their reigns. But a custom had been introduced by him which was slowly bringing the monarchy to ruin. Before the rise of his dynasty, the high offices of State had been seized by the priests of Amon, who had thus usurped supreme power. To prevent the recurrence of such an evil, he confided the great trusts of the kingdom to members of the royal family, giving each a district and revenue to maintain his dignity. It was this practice which Rehoboam and other Jewish kings imitated towards their own sons, but its results were disastrous. These princes of Egypt before long aspired to independence; if not in the first generation, at least in the next. Relying on bands of Libyan mercenaries, some of them even aimed at the throne. Civil wars were incessant, till at last the Prince of Tanis succeeded in overpowering all rivals, and founded a new dynasty, the twenty-third. But even under this sovereignty the petty kings, in great measure, held their own; no fewer than twenty dividing the land between them under their nominal head.[1]

Determined to assert their authority, the Tanite kings fought hard against these local kinglets, and they, in their turn, unable to cope with the royal forces, committed the fatal error of calling in the aid of the Cushite or Ethiopian kings of Nubia and Lower Egypt. Of these, Piankhi, "the Living One," proved a ruinous ally, for he had no sooner overthrown the Pharaoh than he seized his throne and proclaimed himself king of all Egypt; founding the dynasty known as the "Ethiopian," under which Egypt was to enjoy a glimpse of its old renown.

The weakness of the Nile valley was the opportunity of the tribes of the South, and Ethiopian armies, eager to con-

[1] Isa. xix. 11–13. Zoan = Tanis. Noph = Memphis.

quer the fertile North, swarmed out of the Soudan, as the Arab tribes have been trying to do in our own day, pressing on to the rich plain of Egypt, to burn, plunder, and rule. A strong Egyptian faction existed in Samaria; perhaps in part from the old tradition of Jeroboam I. having found a home on the Nile in his exile, and having brought thence an Egyptian queen, but, still more, from the wily diplomacy of the Pharaohs, whose agents in all the courts of Palestine constantly urged alliance with their masters, and promised their help to any who refused to pay tribute to Assyria. In his difficult position Hoshea seems to have tried to keep favour with the Great King,[1] while secretly treating for assistance in a projected revolt, from So or Sabako of Egypt, the second king of the Ethiopian[2] dynasty, a strong ruler, the son of Piankhi, who soon put an end to the Egyptian political chaos.

But the Samaritan king was soon to find, like others at a later time, that Egypt was a bruised reed on which to lean. Sabako was, in fact, too busy in establishing his power on the Nile to think of foreign conquests. He is said to have burned alive the Pharaoh he found still claiming the throne, and the petty lords were not crushed without much trouble. But he succeeded after long efforts in making a united kingdom of Egypt and Ethiopia, a task the

[1] Amos vi. 1.

[2] 2 Kings xvii. 4. Schenkel, *Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 338. Birch's *Egypt*, p. 165. Savah is called in Sargon's annals, "The Sultan," and is distinguished from "the Pharaoh," king of Egypt. He was, in fact, the lord paramount, with an Egyptian king under him, at Tanis, besides many other petty kings throughout the Valley of the Nile and the Delta. *Keilinschriften*, p. 157. The affix *ka* was added in Egypt to the names of the Ethiopian kings. It is the article. Thus Seveh or Schava becomes Sabako. In the Bible this is contracted to So; on the Assyrian monuments to Schava. Savah, though the second king of the dynasty, was regarded as its real founder, from his ability and deeds. Lenormant's *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. iii. pp. 350–1.

more easy from his claiming, with a shadow of right, descent from the ancient royal line of Rameses. His ancestors who had founded the so-called Ethiopian kingdom, were the descendants of that great king, and, while themselves Egyptians, made their court Egyptian also, spoke Egyptian, and followed Egyptian customs. Gradually, of course, in such isolation, the Egyptian blood became mingled with that of the races over which they ruled, till king and nobles became in their kingdom of Meroë or Napata, in blood, language, and manners, less and less Egyptian. Still there was the tradition of the past, and enough of the Egyptian element to make it easy for Sabako to play the part of a true "Pharaoh," and for the Egyptians to accept him as of their old royal race and to submit to his house for more than a century. It is thus explained how Tirhakah, the second king after[1] Sabako, is at one time spoken of as "Pharaoh, king of Egypt," and at another, as king of Ethiopia, since he was both; the Egyptians and Ethiopians being united under one monarch, and forming, for the time, one people. It is from this relation of the two countries, moreover, that Isaiah foresees the Assyrian "leading away the Egyptians as captives,[2] and that the Jewish people would be ashamed of Ethiopia, their expectation, and of Egypt, their glory."

But Assyrian spies in Samaria disclosed the treason to their master before it was ripe, and the doom of Hoshea was settled. It was vain that he tried to be a good and true king,[3] seeking as far as he could to re-establish the worship of Jehovah. It was too late to save his country. Calf wor-

[1] Isa. xxxvi. 6; xxxvii. 9. [2] Isa. xx. 4–8.

[3] 2 Kings xvii. 2. Josephus, however, speaks of him as a wicked man and a despiser of the worship of God. *Ant.*, IX. xiii. 1.

ship had indeed well-nigh ceased, for Pul had carried off the calf from Dan,[1] and the one at Bethel was taken away by the Assyrians.[2] Wishing to revive the old theocracy as far as possible, Hoshea is said to have removed the frontier guards who turned back pilgrims anxious to go up to Jerusalem for worship. Things had gone too far, however, for any efforts to save the kingdom. The prophet Amos had not spoken of alliances with Assyria or Egypt, circumstances in his day not demanding that he should do so, but his successor, Hosea—the same name as the reigning king—vehemently denounced them, now that they were in favour.[3] What his crowned namesake could have done otherwise, humanly speaking, is hard to imagine, for the help of God was promised only on the unfulfilled condition of Israel returning heartily to His service.

Meanwhile, the northern kingdom was passing rapidly to its fall. Hoshea had ascended the throne of Samaria in 731 or 730,[4] three years before Hezekiah's reign began. Pul or Tiglath-pileser II. had died in 728 or 727, and was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV., and this change of ruler had already led to a fresh revolt in Babylonia, which detained the Assyrian army in the east. Hoshea seized the opportunity thus offered, to form a league with Phœnicia and other States of Palestine, and strike once more for independence. To this movement he had been craftily incited by So,[5] or Sabako, king of Egypt, of the Ethiopian dynasty, who again sought to protect himself by an uprising in Palestine, from the dreaded advance of Assyria to the Nile.[6] But Babylon

[1] This is a Jewish tradition. [2] Hos. x. 8. Beth-aven = Bethel.

[3] Hos. v. 13; vii. 11; viii. 9; xii. 1.

[4] 729 is the year given by some for the murder of Pekah.

[5] 2 Kings xvii. 4. Lenormant, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 350. See p. 278.

[6] The notices of Jewish kings in the Assyrian inscriptions, compared with the German Bible-chronology, shew the following results:

having been again subdued, Shalmaneser was speedily free to turn his arms to the west, and forthwith marched towards the Mediterranean, and appeared in Palestine in 725 with his army. Stirred up against Assyria by the intrigues of the Egyptian ministers at Samaria and Tyre, Hoshea, in alliance with the Phœnician city and perhaps some other Canaanite powers, had refused tribute to Nineveh, on the strength of worthless promises of military aid from the Nile. Unfortunately for Tyre, it had roused a bitter feeling against itself in the other Phœnician cities, leading them to throw themselves, as its foes, into the arms of the Assyrians. A fleet fitted out by these betrayers of their country was, however, dispersed by the Syrians with a much smaller force, and Shalmaneser was compelled to restrict himself to a blockade of the brave island-capital, which resisted stoutly for five years, before the end of which the Assyrian throne had changed hands.[1]

Meanwhile, a corps of the invading army was detached against Samaria, and at once invested it. But the haughty capital of Israel defended itself nobly. A terrible calamity, however, erelong overtook it. Its king, Hoshea, was by some

On the Monuments.	The German Bible-Chronology.
Ahab, B.C. 854. Battle at Karkar.	Ahab, reigned from . . B.C. 918-896.
Jehu, 842. Tribute.	Jehu . . . . . 884-857.
Uzziah was at war with Pul or Tiglath-pileser, in the years 745-739.	Uzziah . . . . . 809-759.
Menahem, 738. Tribute.	Menahem . . . . . 771-761.
Pekah, 734. Conquered by Tiglath-pileser.	Pekah . . . . . 758-738.
Hoshea, 728. Last year of his paying tribute to Tiglath-pileser.	Hoshea . . . . . 729-723.
722. Fall of Samaria.	Fall of Samaria . . . 722.

—*Keilinschriften*, p. 299.

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, IX. xiv. 2. There are no annals of Shalmaneser in the Nineveh relics. The water by which the Tyrians supplied their wants, is said to have been got from a great spring which burst up through the salt-water bay.

means taken prisoner and led off in chains to Assyria, where he remained till his death.[1] As Hosea the prophet had foretold, he disappeared like the foam on water,[2] and was utterly cut off in a morning.[3] But though thus without its king, the city continued its defence with a stout heart; three years passing before its fall.

While Tyre and Samaria were thus engaged in a mortal struggle with their terrible enemy, Shalmaneser died, in the year 722,[4] whether by conspiracy or of disease is not clear. Sargon, his successor, already a man of about sixty, never speaks of himself as his son, though in the boasting style of Eastern kings he claims to be the descendant of "the three hundred and fifty kings of Assyria." But whether an adventurer or the legitimate heir to the empire, he was supremely fitted for the dignity. His great deeds filled the world for the next seventeen years.[5]

Tenacious, energetic, and gifted with military genius, the new monarch ultimately made himself master of both Tyre and Samaria, which Egypt did not attempt to help, after having led them into revolt. What their capture involved has been already described, in part; but the Assyrian sculptures add some details to the picture. To judge from the slabs in Sennacherib's palace, portraying the siege of Lachish,[6] Samaria was defended by double walls, with parapets and towers, and by fortified bastions. Against these works a huge encircling mound or broad wall was raised, strongly built of stones, bricks, earth, and branches of trees, and on this, battering rams and towers of attack were planted. To

[1] Lenormant thinks he had been summoned to Nineveh, to justify himself, and not venturing to disobey, had been seized and put in prison on his arrival. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 354.

[2] Hos. x. 7. [3] Hos. x. 15. [4] Smith, p. 91.

[5] He reigned from 722 to 708.

[6] Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 149.

destroy these was the great aim of the besieged. The sculptures shew the battlements and towers thronged with defenders, showering arrows, javelins, stones, and blazing torches on the assailants, while the Assyrians beneath pour water with great ladles on the flaming missiles which threaten to destroy their engines. But it was all in vain. After three years of close investment and fierce attack, the capital of the northern kingdom fell, and then followed the usual sequel of Assyrian victories. The slabs shew a procession of captives issuing from a gateway, and making their way to the presence of the Great King, who sits, gorgeously arrayed, on his throne, to receive them. Some of the prisoners are put to death before him by the dagger and sword ; others lie on the ground in the agony of being flayed alive. In every direction men are carrying off the spoils of the city : arms, shields, chariots, vases, furniture, and what-

SIEGE OF SAMARIA. KHORSABAD.

ever else was of value. Then followed the great deportation of the people to distant parts, and Samaria and Israel were virtually blotted out from among the nations. Fortunately we have Sargon's own account of his triumph. "I besieged the city of Samaria," says he, "and took it. I carried off 27,280 of the citizens; I chose 50 chariots for myself from the whole number taken; all the other property of the people of the town I left for my servants to take. I appointed resident officers over them, and imposed on them the same tribute as had formerly been paid.[1] In the place of those taken into captivity I sent thither inhabitants of lands conquered by me, and imposed the tribute on them which I require from Assyrians."[2] The resident officers thus set over Samaria, included an Assyrian governor, to collect the tribute each year and send it to Nineveh, but the small number of Israelites carried off shews that, at least for the time, only those actively compromised against Sargon were deported; Samaria being treated in fact, much as Jerusalem was hereafter to be, by Nebuchadnezzar, in the reign of Jehoiachim. There is not, indeed, any ground for thinking that the country was stripped of its Jewish inhabitants and left desolate. The great bulk of the common people were allowed to remain where they were, if only to pay the tribute, which could not have been exacted from a desert, or raised, without a long interval of remission, from foreign colonists brought into the country. To speak of the Ten Tribes, as a whole, being carried off, is therefore an error; only a small portion were exiled. The low condition to which the kingdom had fallen is forcibly shewn in the fact that, whereas Ahab had been able, two hundred years before, to send two thousand chariots to the help of Hadadezer

[1] Schrader, p. 158. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

—the Benhadad II. of Scripture, king of Damascus—Sargon now found only fifty to carry off from Samaria. Yet there was no little life still, for many years, in the old capital and its territory. Even after its fall in 722, Samaria was quite a respectable power, with which Assyria had to reckon. It is last mentioned as a kingdom in the Assyrian records of the year B.C. 673. Soon after this, an Assyrian prefect of Samaria had taken the place of the now suppressed kings. Counting sixty-five years, from 734 or 736, when Isaiah met Ahaz, we are brought to 671 or 673, which may well have been the very year when Samaria finally ceased to be a people.[1]

The captives taken from the tribes beyond Jordan by Tiglath-pileser in B.C. 733—eleven years before the fall of Samaria—had been carried, we are told, to Halah, and Khabour, and Hara, "the mountain-land of Media," and to the river of Gozan, the same regions to which their brethren from the west of the Jordan were sent by Sargon, after 722. The Book of Kings strikingly agrees with this statement.[2] The king of Assyria, we are told, carried Israel to Assyria, and placed some of them in "Halah," apparently on the upper course of the river Khabour, in north-western Mesopotamia, not far from Haran, the home of Abraham for many years, and of Laban after him, in a district watered by many "rivers," or canals of irrigation, and known as Gozan or Gauzanitis. After the first shock of enforced exile had passed, such a region would seem no bad exchange even for the green hills of Central Palestine, offering, as it did, not only abundant means of living, but also opportunities on every hand for growing prosperity. A second division of the deportation, however, does not seem to have been so fortunate, its home

[1] Delitzsch, p. 129. Cheyne, vol. i. p. 44. Smith's *Assurbanipal*, p. 36.
[2] 2 Kings xvii. 6.

being chosen for it in the mountain valleys of Media,[1] which, however fertile, were very remote, and in the hands of a race, not like those on the Khabour, akin to the Hebrews in blood. Far away in the wild highlands, beyond the Tigris, they would very soon in all probability be merged in the surrounding population, having no such bond of an earnest national faith to keep them isolated, as saved their brethren of Judah when carried off, in a later day, to Babylon, and this laxity of religious feeling would tend greatly to the same result on the banks of the rivers of Gozan.

The place of the twenty-seven thousand carried away from Samaria was filled, we are told, by colonies sent by Sargon[2] from various regions. Some were from Babylonia, then a province of the Assyrian empire; some from Cuthah, now Tel-Ibrahim, north-east of the ruins of Babylon, a place famous in Bible ages as the great necropolis city of Chaldæa, the dead being brought to it from every part for interment, as they still are to various Eastern towns, ghastly caravans bearing the corpses from great distances to be laid in the holy soil. Nergal, we are told, was the god of Cuthah, and his temple is mentioned in the inscriptions exhumed from its mounds. Its name is said to mean "the city of the bowing down of the head," and, indeed, it must have been so, for the remains of its countless graves and tombs are scattered over miles. Legends of the plague-gods are associated with it in the records of the tablets, which speak of the pestilence as being sent over by night from Namtar[3]—the plague-causer—the dead passing into the domains of Nergal, who was the god of death. Namtar is,

[1] Septuagint. [2] 2 Kings xvii. 24.
[3] Compare Ps. xci. 6. "The pestilence that walked in darkness."

moreover, spoken of as "the chastising sword," a figure which reminds us of the angel with the drawn sword held over Jerusalem.[1] Some colonists came from "Ava," apparently another town of Babylonia, though it may have been in Syria. Some were marched down to Samaria, from Hamath, in the valley of the Orontes, the hereditary foe, as a Hittite city, of the rulers of Assyria. This ill-fated place, the annals inform us, was taken by Sargon, in the second year of his reign, 721–20. Flaying alive its king, and reserving for himself two hundred chariots and six hundred charioteers, he sent off the people to Samaria and other lands, replacing them by settlers carried thither from distant regions. Others came from Sepharvaim or the two Sipparas, one of which has been discovered in the mounds of Abu Habba, south-west of Bagdad, and a little east of the present bed of the Euphrates; the other being also discovered in the ruin heaps of Anbar, at an hour's distance—that is, less than three miles—from the first. It was known as Sippara of the goddess Annuit, the early Accadian Istar, or Venus, it neighbour being famous as Sippara of the Sun-god. Sargon I., who lived B.C. 3750, built or restored the "double city" and gave it the name of Accad, which was gradually applied to the whole of North Babylonia. To him also it owed its great Temple of the Sun, in some of the almost countless halls and chambers of which he founded a great library, one of the treasures of which was a work on astronomy and astrology, in seventy-two books. The temple, curiously, was called Bethel, "the house of El," and has yielded a striking corroboration of its special worship in a monument on which is carved a strange image of the divine solar disk. With the spread and fame of the empire

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 16.

of Sargon the worship of the Sun became famous also. The empire and cult were alike Semitic, and wherever the Semite planted himself the Sun-god was worshipped under some form and name. A passage in the annals of the first year of Sargon, in which Samaria fell, seems almost an echo of the words of Scripture: "Having overcome the king of Babylon, I carried away —— of the inhabitants with their goods, and settled them in the land of the Chatti,"[1] that is, in Syro-Israel. In a cylinder inscription we further read: "Sargon who subdued the people of Thammud (an Arab race of Arabia Petrea) of Ibadid, Marsiman, and Chayapu, after slaying many, carried off the rest to the distant land of the House of Omri" (Samaria).[2] In the annals of the seventh year,[3] we are told, moreover, "I subdued the inhabitants of Tasid, Ibadid, Marsiman, Chayapu, the people of distant Arba, the dwellers in the land of Bari, which even the learned have not known, and which had never brought their tribute to the king, my father—and transplanted the survivors and settled them in the city of Samaria."[4]

The dates of these records shew that the forced immigration of heathen foreigners continued through a series of years; the first having been, as stated in Kings, from Babylonia. Besides the places mentioned in the annals, it would appear from a passage in Ezra,[5] that there was a second colonizing of Samaria by the Assyrians, at a much later date, perhaps in consequence of an attempted revolt. It took place in the reign of Esar-haddon, who held the throne of Nineveh from B.C. 681 to B.C. 669–8, his son Asnapper,

[1] Schrader, p. 162.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[3] B.C. 715.
[4] Schrader, p. 163.
[5] Ezra iv. 2-20.

or Assur-bani-pal, settling a number of Elamites (some from Sura) in the old territory of the Ten Tribes, along with other bands from Babylon and Erech. It is probable, indeed, that the settlement was actually made under Assur-bani-pal, as he conquered both Elam and Susa, and took both Babylon and Erech by storm, so that it is probable that Asnapper's name in Ezra is a copyist's error for Esar-haddon.

Thus the northern kingdom finally perished, amidst wild convulsions. Stripped of its inhabitants, by long civil commotions and by various deportations, the land threatened, in some parts, to relapse into a wilderness. Beasts of prey, and notably lions, increased so much as to become dangerous—a calamity which seemed to the superstitious foreign settlers scattered over it, a judgment on them for their not knowing how to worship the local god. At their humble request, therefore, an Israelite priest was sent from Assyria to give them the needful instruction, and to set apart whom he could as his colleagues. But heathenism is difficult to eradicate, and the only result was the addition of the God of Israel to the gods of the different nations now in the land. The men of Babylonia still "made Succoth Benoth," images of Sakkut Binutu or Merodach, the chief ruler of the universe. The men of Cuth made Nergal, the "God of death," their national deity; those of Hamath worshipped Ashima, perhaps the Phœnician goat-god Esmun; the Avites, Nibhaz—apparently a dog-headed god—and Tartak, seemingly an embodiment of the evil principle. Still worse, the men of Sepharvaim, true to their ancestral worship of the Sun-god, Samas, or Baal, burned their children alive as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the male and female idols of Moloch worship. Judah was now all that

remained of the Hebrew kingdoms, though there were still large numbers of the Ten Tribes, who had escaped deportation. Jerusalem, henceforth, became the centre of the true religion; on its fidelity the future history of the Church depended.

The ultimate fate of the small proportion of the Ten Tribes carried into exile has been much disputed. It seems beyond doubt, however, that the great bulk of them were ultimately lost—by intermarriage and the loss of tribal exclusiveness—among the nations to whose lands they were carried, in successive deportations, extending through many years. We find some, in the time of Tobit, at Rages, not far from Teheran in Persia.[1] But while the Book of Kings indicates the regions to which the main stream of captives was turned, many were sent to widely distant parts of the vast Assyrian empire. Elam and Babylonia became the home of multitudes. Many more were carried prisoners to Egypt by the Nile kings, and many went thither voluntarily, while there was hardly a land of the Mediterranean whither vast numbers had not been sold as slaves.

It would be certain, however, that a number of them clung faithfully to their nationality and their old religion, and from these, after the destruction of Nineveh, it seems beyond question, came bands of faithful ones back to Galilee in sufficient numbers to make that favoured district of their homeland once more a loyal Jewish country, as we know it was in the days of our Lord. Only a very small proportion of the captivity of Judah left Babylon to re-establish Jerusalem, and yet we speak of this little colony as the "Return," and as fulfilling the prophecy that Judah would be restored to Palestine. It cannot be too much, then, to claim as

[1] Ewald, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 659. Tobit i. 14.

much for the larger "Return" of members of the Ten Tribes which repeopled Galilee, as no less explicit a fulfilment of the prophecies that these Ten Tribes would be brought back to their own land. The one return was even more signal than the other.

CHAPTER XI.

THE OPENING OF ISAIAH'S MINISTRY.

To understand the prophets it is above all things necessary to know as fully as possible the history of their times, for, as we have seen in the cases of Joel, Amos, and Hosea, they were preachers of righteousness to their contemporaries much more than seers who revealed the future. The sermons of Latimer at Paul's Cross, of Luther at Worms, of Knox before the Popish queen and nobles, the field preachings of Wesley or Whitefield, taken with their lives and acts, and, when need was, their death, are the true counterparts of what Isaiah and the rest of the Hebrew prophets thought, did, and suffered.

They denounced oppression and amassing overgrown properties, and grinding the labourers to the smallest possible pittance; and they denounced the Jewish High Church party for countenancing all these iniquities and prophesying smooth things to please the Jewish aristocracy. They denounced the sins of the day, idolatry, drunkenness, dress, pride, and immorality; they denounced the low tone and the sins of the priesthood; they denounced foreign alliances which they believed dangerous to the State, and bearded king, noble, and commoner, alike, when they had sins in any of them to rebuke and threaten with punishment.

The empire of Assyria, as we have seen, was once more the great object of men's thoughts and fears in the days of Isaiah.

Its seat lay in the region of two mighty rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris, far to the east and north-east of Palestine, from which it was separated by the Syrian desert, which runs up like a huge wedge or triangle, almost to the foot of the vast chain of mountains extending from Asia Minor to Armenia. Necessitated by this impassable barrier to go up the Euphrates before they crossed over to Western Asia, the Assyrian armies could reach Palestine only from the north, and are hence always spoken of as coming from that quarter. The original capital of the empire lay on the west bank of the Tigris, some miles south of Mosul, at a spot now known as Kaleh Schergat, and took its name Assur, from the chief deity worshipped by its citizens—Assur, "the good god."[1] This eponym passed thence to the whole region inhabited by the Assyrian people, even after the capital had been transferred farther north, to Nineveh, on the east bank of the Tigris, opposite the town of Mosul, at a point where the Greater Zab falls into the larger river. In this territory, almost the same as that known to the Greeks as Adiabene, the future empire had its cradle; the Armenian mountains girding it on the north; the Lesser Zab on the south; and Media on the east. Assyria proper was, thus, on the north and east, a mountainous country; but these highlands, clothed with the oak, the sycamore, the plum, the poplar, the sumach, and other trees, sink gradually into plains on the south and west. The climate was thus comparatively cool in the upper districts, while abundant streams flowing from them created a rich vegetation in the burning lowlands. The almond and mulberry, the orange, lemon, pomegranate, apricot, and vine; melons, apples, pears, plums, and cherries, flourished in different districts; with grain of all kinds,

[1] Schrader, p. 8.

hemp, and even cotton. Inferior date palms and a few olives grew in the plains, but the citron trees were especially famous. As a whole, however, Assyria was very destitute of large timber. The sculptures of Nineveh shew that the country abounded anciently in hares, deer of various kinds, dogs, oxen, sheep, goats, the camel, the buffalo, the wild ass, the lion; eagles, vultures, ostriches, the partridge, and other birds.

The inhabitants belonged, like those of Babylonia, to the Semitic branch of the Caucasian race.[1] The language of both countries was the same, and so, in all essential respects, was the religion, that of Babylon being the elder. The writing of the Assyrians, moreover, was only a simpler form of the Babylonian. Their government was a repetition of the common type of Oriental despotism; unrestricted power being in the hands of the monarch. In contrast to the mass of the community, he gloried in the number of the inmates of his harem, for not even natural laws were allowed to circumscribe so great a personage. One wife, however, held the first place, and Sardanapalus—Assur-bani-pal—is even sculptured sitting at a meal with his queen. Eunuchs abounded, as keepers of the royal seraglio; their chief bearing the title of Rabsaris.[2] They were also prized for a similar ignoble purpose in the harems of the great nobles, but they formed in addition the chief representatives of Assyrian art and science, and largely engrossed the profession of scribes, though this was shared by some who were not of their class. As elsewhere in the East, they often rose to very high posts.[3]

The government of the provinces was in the hand of great officials, called Sagans, or Viceroys, who, in conquered dis-

[1] Gen. x. 11. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 17. [3] *Ibid.*

tricts, took also the title of the former ruler, as "princes" or "kings." The highest officers of state were the Tartan,[1] or commander-in chief; the Rabshakeh, the chief of the staff;[2] and the Rabsaris. The whole State was organized on a strictly military footing, and to this the rulers of Nineveh owed the enormous political success they attained at the head of so warlike a people.[3] They were not, however, indifferent to art or science, the latter of which they largely borrowed from the Babylonians. Astronomy and mathematics were special studies among them, and, indeed, passed from Assyria to the natives of Western Asia. The day was divided into hours,[4] with subdivisions, our minutes and seconds,[5] and they used the Babylonian weights—the talent, mina, and shekel.[5] They, rather than the Egyptians, were the teachers of the Greeks, not only in architecture, but in the plastic and other arts, and the artistic working of metals. Laborious chroniclers of the national history abounded; each king leaving copious annals of the events of his reign. Great care was bestowed on the preparation of chronological lists. Nor were the refinements of general literature neglected. Treatises on the language and its grammar, on religion, geography, and much else have come down to us. The Assyrians and Babylonians had each a poetry of their own, marked by depth of feeling and religious enthusiasm, and similar in rhythmical structure to the Hebrew psalms. They had even epics, which the Hebrews did not attempt; one known as "The Descent of Istar to Hades," being the principal example found as yet.

The religion of the two nations thus inter-related was fundamentally a star worship, but in the oldest times this

[1] Isa. xx. 1. 2 Kings xviii. 17.
[2] Lenormant. "A high military official." Schrader.
[3] Isa. v. 27. [4] Herod., ii. 109. [5] "Assyrien," in Riehm.

was accompanied with a kind of Dualism. In the form in which it meets us it could not have been originally of Semitic origin, for even the desert Arabs have nothing at all similar. Their star worship, so far as it can be traced, is of a totally different nature. The Assyrian ideas can only, therefore, have been derived from the ancient race, apparently of the Turanian type, from which their writing was borrowed—the original inhabitants of Chaldæa, whom the Semites invaded from the south.[1] The godhead was represented among that primitive people by an eight-rayed star, and, in keeping with this, the first worship of Babylonia and Assyria was directed to the sun, moon, and five planets, from which the week of seven days, and the names of those days, were derived.[2] The sun was called Samas,[3] the Baal or "Lord" of Western Asia; the Moon-god, Sin. The planet Mercury was the god Nebo. Venus, as the morning star, was Istar—the Astarte of the Canaanites; as the evening star, Beltis or Baaltis—the Asherah of Palestine. Saturn was the god Adar or Adarmalik; the Adrammeleech of Scripture. Shortened to Malik, it became the Canaanite Molech, or Moloch, or Milcom. This planet was further known as Kewan among the Syrians, Persians, Arabs, and Palestine nations, and also as Sakkuth.[4] Jupiter was the god Merodach, known also as Bil, or Bel, "The Lord." Mars was Nergal, the god of Cutha, the necropolis city of Chaldæa. His throne was set up in Hades, where he sat crowned, awaiting the entrance of the dead kings of the earth. He was, in fact, Death, "the strong one," ruling

[1] Vol. i. p. 211, ff.

[2] The lunar month was divided into four weeks of seven days, the seventh being a Sabbath. But they were fixed on the 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th of the month, so that between the last Sabbath of one month and the first of another, more than seven days elapsed. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 14.

[3] Hebrew, Shemesh.

[4] Amos v. 26.

over "the great city." Originally called Ner, he became "Nergal—the great Ner." He marched in front of the gods, as the death-dealing hero, stalking before his comrades and challenging the enemy to battle. These five gods were subordinated to the god Anu, who was, besides, supreme over two non-planetary gods, Nisroch or Ea, and Anos. The god Dagon, the "great fish," was worshipped as the emblem of vital fertility. Bin, Rammon, or Rimmon, was the god of winds and clouds, of thunder and lightning, of snow and rain: he is invoked to drown the fields of the wicked, and to pour refreshing streams on the thirsty land. He became the Sun-god of the Syrians, whose untimely death was mourned in the plain of Jezreel, as that of the Babylonian Tammuz was mourned by the women of Phœnicia and Jerusalem. Hadad-Rimmon is a compound name, shewing that the gods Hadad and Rimmon were the same. There were, further, evil spirits of the night—Lil and Lilith,[1] male and female. *Mul-lil* was originally a local divinity of Nipur; his name signifying "the lord of the ghost world." "Lil" properly meant a dust storm, or "cloud of dust," but was also applied to ghosts, whose food was supposed to be the dust of the earth, and whose form was like that of a dust-cloud; and became in the feminine "Lilatu," the "Lilith" of the Hebrews, who was a night demon, whose delight it was to suck the blood of sleeping victims. Isaiah heightens the picture of the ghastly desolation which should befall Idumæa by making its ruins the haunt of Lilith. According to the Rabbis, Lilith had been

[1] Isa. xxxiv. 14 (Hebrew). In A. V. "screech-owl;" margin, "night-monster." Buxtorff says, that the German Jews in his day wrote with chalk on the corners of the room where a child was born, and on the bed, "Come, Adam and Eve: begone, Lilith." They wrote up, also, the names of the three angels of medicine and healing Senoi, Sansenoi, and Sammangeloph. *Lex. Heb. and Chald.*, s. v. Gesenius, *Iesaia*, vol. i. p. 915, ff. Eisenmenger, vol. ii. p. 413, ff.

the first wife of Adam, and had the form of a beautiful woman; but she lived on the blood of children whom she slew at night. The god Il, or El, moreover, afterwards supplanted in Assyria by the god Assur, remained as a dim recollection of the true god. Each of the gods had a female counterpart, such as Anat, Beltis, or Baaltis. Nor did those I have named by any means exhaust the Pantheon, which, in the end, boasted sixty thousand divinities.

Based on the worship of the forces of nature, the Assyrian religion, like that of all Western Asia, was profoundly gross and sensual. Nothing laid to the charge of the gods of Palestine is too foul to be applied to those of Nineveh.

Unlike most Asiatics, the Assyrians were a fierce and warlike race; shewing their nature even in their field sports by preferring to hunt the lion and the wild bull rather than gentler animals. The invasion by their armies was as "a tempest of hail and a destroying storm," or "a flood of mighty waters."[1] Nineveh was a "bloody city" in the eyes of the Hebrew prophets.[2] Prisoners might be spared to toil as slaves, but the terrible cruelties inflicted on vast numbers of them after a battle or a siege have been already quoted in the words of an Assyrian king himself.[3] To impale, to flay alive, to blind, to lead with rings through the lips, were only some of the forms of torture.

Nor could the Assyrians be said to have the best virtues of the brave; for, as a nation, they are branded as treacherous, untruthful, and lawless.[4] No treaty could bind them; might was right, and, when interest seemed to demand it, they "regarded no man."[5] Their pride was that of a race which looked on all others as their natural inferiors.[6]

[1] Isa. xxviii. 2. [2] Nah. iii. 1. [3] Vol. ii. p. 449.
[4] Isa. xxxiii. 1. Nah. iii. 1. Jon. iii. 8. [5] Isa. xxxiii. 8.
[6] Zeph. ii. 15. Ezek. xxxi. 10, 11. Isa. x. 7-14; xxxvii. 24-28.

The grandeur of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, has been realized only in recent times through the excavations made in its ruins. Those vast groups of mounds, widely isolated from each other, were long supposed to have been enclosed in a common rampart, but no traces of such an erection have been discovered: the isolated mound-heaps shew traces of walls enclosing a huge space round them. Five such groups of low earth hills, marking different quarters of the great union of communities, still arrest the eye of the traveller. Khorsabad, to the north, is on a tributary of the Khansa, which itself runs into the Tigris,

GATEWAY OF SARGON'S PALACE, KHORSABAD.
The god Ninip, strangling a lion, stands on the left hand.

through the middle of the second group of mounds, known as Kuyundshik, once Nineveh proper, the northern ruin heaps marking Dur Sarrakin, or the city of Sargon, the contemporary of Isaiah's earliest life and the destroyer of Samaria. Still more to the south, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, are the great humps of soil which cover what was once "Resen;" and below this again, a short distance, are the earth-waves that cover Calah, now "Nimrud," while considerably to the east are the mounds of Gaugamela. These, however, are only the chief remains of Nineveh, for the wide plain, from Khorsabad to Calah, is dotted over with great heaps under which lie buried part of the

exceeding great city. No traces of the ordinary houses that once filled this huge space now survive: the want of stone having caused everything to be built of brick, made only of sun-dried clay, which has gradually mouldered and been carried away by the rains of millenniums, except where the mass was so great, as in the case of royal palaces, that its decay created natural hills, defying the destructive elements. Sun-dried bricks might last for centuries, if carefully protected by plaster from the ravages of the weather. But, once exposed, they soon crumbled into shapeless mounds, hiding and preserving the alabaster slabs of palaces, with their pictures and writing; the tablets of baked clay, once in libraries and imperial registers and record chambers, and all the other relics of Nineveh. But the palaces whose ruins are buried beneath the mounds on the Tigris are only of comparatively recent date, others more ancient having vanished, except in some chance inscription from their walls, built into some one more recent. We know the sites of royal buildings which must have been about a century old at the fall of Samaria, but the great palaces whose ruins have been excavated in our day, are the work of Sargon, the conqueror of Samaria, or his son Sennacherib, or Esar-haddon, and Assur-bani-pal. None of these amazing structures had been raised when the captives from Israel were carried off to Assyria, but others, perhaps as magnificent, no doubt witnessed to the grandeur of the "King of Kings." What they were may be imagined from the size and splendour of the remains of the best preserved of these wondrous buildings, the palace of Sargon. Like all the others, it stood on an artificial platform of earth, which, in this case, was nearly twenty-five acres in area: the mass of clay brought together to form it being estimated at

48,233,000 cubic feet. There were over two hundred more or less spacious halls and chambers in the edifice raised on this vast foundation: the ruins of the walls of some are twenty-six feet high, their thickness being quite as great as the still remaining height, while the vaulted roofs where they are found prove to have been at least ten feet thick. This vast solidity was demanded to keep out the terrible heat of the Nineveh summer, which makes the walls of the houses in the present Mosul, on the other bank of the Tigris, glow with a painful heat even through the night. The halls and audience rooms were lined with slabs of alabaster, brought from the mountains of the north, and carved with hunting scenes and the victories of the Great King, those taken from the palace of Sargon I. forming, it is believed, in all, a length of about a mile and a half.

Nor was the grandeur of the palace of Sardanapalus—Assur-bani-pal—built not long before the fall of Nineveh, much less wonderful, for its length was at least three hundred and fifty feet, and its breadth almost as great; while the court before it was one hundred and twenty feet long and ninety broad. The great terraces, on which all this magnificence rose, were, of course, embellished with every accessory of splendour, as may be judged from the fact that twenty-six pairs of huge winged bulls, the cherubim of the Assyrians, were found before the various entrances of Sargon's palace, and as many as ten pairs on one side of that of his son, Sennacherib. Temple towers rose in steps in the cities, each step sacred to a particular god; a watch-tower, from which the heavens could be observed, crowning the whole.[1] All the resources of unlimited wealth and despotic power were in fact expended, age after age, in making the palaces, tem-

[1] Vol. i. p. 241.

ples, and public edifices of Nineveh the glory of the empire. Magnificent gardens for the pleasure of the monarch and his court, or of the nobles, varied the monotony of splendour. But the grandeur of Nineveh may perhaps be best realized from the statement of the ancients respecting its walls—that is, the walls of the portion of it which formed Nineveh proper. According to Diodorus, they were one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots might be driven abreast on the road formed inside the parapet on the top, while on their vast circuit there rose no fewer than fifteen hundred towers, a hundred feet higher than the walls—that is, two hundred feet high, from the ground. Xenophon,[1] who passed close by it on his retreat with the Ten Thousand, long after it had been left to moulder away, speaks of it as one hundred feet high, twenty-five feet thick, and faced with stone for twenty feet up from the base, but this, it will be seen, is a much less amazing description than that of Diodorus.

But this vast rampart was not the only defence of the city. Moats, the channel of the river, and long canals dug for the purpose, cut it off from the country around, and made its siege much more difficult.

The Assyrian empire had been founded for many ages,[2] and its people had shewn themselves warlike and powerful, but their arms had not threatened Palestine till the 9th century before Christ. In the 14th and 15th centuries Egypt had been the great military power, and had marched its armies repeatedly over Palestine and Syria, sometimes as far as Nineveh.[3] Even at that early date a fierce struggle had begun between Assyria and Babylon, the daughter and the mother, which was continued from generation to generation.

[1] *Anab.*, III. iv. 10. [2] B.C. *c.* 1820. [3] Thothmes III. did so.

In the 13th century the fortunes of the empire sank very low, but a great king, Tiglath-pileser I., who reigned from B.C. 1120 to B.C. 1100, once more raised its power, and at his death left a wide territory nominally subject to him, from the Mediterranean to Babylon, Palestine, however, lying south of its sweep. His fierce career must have been the talk of men in the days of Eli and Samuel, for he was the Bonaparte of their age.

As often happens, however, in the East, the empire, created at such an expense of human misery, broke up at his death, and Assyria again fell into comparative insignificance. It was in this interval that the empire of David rose; the decay of the great monarchy on the Euphrates making his Syrian conquests possible. But in the time of King Asa of Judah, the fortunes of Nineveh were once more in the ascendant. A great king had risen. Yet there was again a temporary eclipse; nor was it till about the reign of Jehoash, the son of Ahaziah, that the later Assyrian empire, destined to have such a controlling influence on the fortunes of the Jewish race, was founded by King Assur-nazir-habal.[1] Assyria had been shut out from the Mediterranean for two hundred years, but he cut his way to it once more. Tyre, Sidon, Gebal,[2] and Arvad brought him rich gifts in token of submission, and for the first time the gigantic shadow of the new power fell across Palestine, alarming its various populations with an anticipation of the terrible fate that had struck down other lands.

Hemmed in on the east and north, as has been said, by the great mountain range which, under various names, stretches from Asia Minor to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, the west and south-west offered the only free

[1] = "Assur protects his son." B.C. 883–859.

[2] Gebal = Byblos.

outlet for the military ambition of the newly revived empire. Syria and the Mediterranean coasts having been once reached, it became henceforth the fixed effort of Assyria to conquer all the regions thus laid open.

While Assyria thus hung like a war-cloud over the north-east, and Egypt heaved with revolution in the south-west, a child was born in Jerusalem, destined to leave a greater name than all the monarchs or warriors of his age. The birth-year of Isaiah, the greatest of the prophets, seems to have been about B.C. 760,[1] or perhaps earlier. He appears to have been a Benjamite,[2] and was the son of one Amoz, of whom we know nothing beyond the name, for the various Jewish traditions, that he was no other than Amos the prophet, or a brother of King Amaziah, are mere unfounded inventions. His great-grandson[3] and his great-great-grandson are said to have been prophets; and the name of one of his great-grandchildren, Kolaiah, "the voice of Jehovah,"[4] appears to shew that prophecy was a special endowment in the family through successive generations. It is noteworthy also that when Isaiah married, he chose a wife who was herself a prophetess.[5]

Dwelling in Jerusalem, the centre of political life and activity, the social position of the future prophet's family seems to have been such as to give him every advantage. Instead of being lost in an obscure village, like his contem-

[1] He entered on his prophetical office in the year that King Uzziah died (Isa. vi. 1). But we know from the Assyrian records that Uzziah was alive in B.C. 740. Supposing Isaiah to have been twenty years old when his prophetical activity began, this would take us back to B.C. 760. But Uzziah may have lived several years after B.C. 740.

[2] Neh. xi. 7. Jer. xxix. 21. Ithiel = Immanuel = "God with us," originally, the name of Isaiah's son. Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8. [3] Jer. xxix. 21. Neh. xi. 7.

[4] Hitzig translates it "There is a voice," but Mühlau and Volck render it as in the text.

[5] Isa. viii. 3.

porary Micah, or passing his days on the hills, or in the sycamore groves, like Amos, he was surrounded from childhood by the stir and importance of the capital, in which he was hereafter to be the special counsellor of the throne and an honoured personal friend of its great occupant, Hezekiah.[1] Meanwhile, the significance of his name—"Salvation is from Jehovah"[2]—must have had a weighty influence on a mind so devout. His boyhood and youth, moreover, were passed under the healthy religious and political influences of the wise and good Uzziah, from the glory of whose reign his own character and sentiments caught a tone which marked them through life. In all probability Jeroboam II. was still reigning in Israel in his early childhood, but, as he grew up, the northern kingdom was sinking into anarchy and heathenism, in spite of the earnest and fearless preaching of Amos and Hosea. It is clear, indeed, from portions of his own prophecies, that those of his predecessors were familiar to him.[3] Passages, allusions, and expressions fre-

[1] Ewald's *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 169. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] The following list of parallel passages is from Cheyne :

Isaiah	i. 11-14 ; Amos v. 21, 22 ; Hos. vi. 6 ; Mic. vi. 6-8			(against formal worship).
"	iv. 2 ;	" ix. 13;	" ii. 21, 22	(Fertility in the Messianic age).
"	v. 11, 12 ;	" vi. 5, 7		(luxury of the princes).
"	v. 20 ;	" v. 7 ; " vi. 12		(confusion of morals).
"	ix. 10-12 ;	" ix. 11, 12		(the Messianic empire).
"	i. 21 ;		" iv. 15	(spiritual adultery).
"	i. 23 ;		" ix. 15	(law-makers, law-breakers).
"	i. 29 ;		" iv. 13	(idolatrous groves).
"	i. 2 ;		Mic. i. 2	(prosopopeia of inanimate nature).
"	iii. 13,		" iii. 2, 3	(strong figure for oppression).
"	v. 8 ;		" ii. 2	(violent extension of landed estates).
"	vii. 14 ; " ix. 7 ;		" v. 3-5	(the Messiah and His birth).

quently occur, which shew that the various books known as the Pentateuch—though afterwards revised and perhaps expanded—were then in existence, and were not only diligently studied, but taught to the pious young. Isaiah's writings shew such a familiarity with the early sacred literature of his people as could only have come from knowing it well in his earliest years.[1]

Isaiah xxx. 22;	Mic. v. 13 (idols to be destroyed in the Messianic age).
" xxxviii. 17;	" vii. 19 (strong figure for forgiveness of sin).

The following parallels are from Bunsen's *Bibel-Urkunden*:

Joel iii. 1, 12 compared with Isa. xxxii. 15; Amos ii. 12 compared with Isa. xxx. 10; Amos iv. 11 compared with Isa. vii. 4; Amos v. 2, 15 compared with Isa. iii. 8, 26, x, 20; Hos. viii. 4 compared with Isa. xxx. 1; Hos. ix. 15 compared with Isa. i. 23. In the same way Amos had borrowed from Joel. See Amos i. 2; Joel iii. 16; i. 10. Amos ix. 13; Joel iii. 18. Hosea borrows from both. See Amos vii. 9, Hos. i. 4, 5; Amos i. 2, Hos. xi. 10; Amos ii. 5, Hos. viii. 14; Amos v. 5, Hos. iv. 15; Amos vi. 12, Hos. x. 4; Amos vii. 4, Hos. v. 7; Amos vii. 9, Hos. x. 8; Amos viii. 7, 8, Hos. v. 5, vii. 10, iv. 3.

[1] Cheyne gives the following illustrations (*Isaiah*, ii. pp. 219, 220, 225):

Isaiah i. 2 *a*.	Deut. xxxii. 1, "Hear, O heavens."
" " *b*.	" xxxii. 6, 20, "faithless children."
" xxx. 9	
" i. 3	" xxxii. 6, 28, 29, "Israel is without knowledge."
" i. 6	" xxviii. 35, "Israel's sickness."
" i. 9, 10	" xxxii. 32, "Sodom and Gomorrah."
" i. 17, 23	Ex. xxii. 22, Deut. xxvii. 19, "the orphan and the widow."
" x. 2	
" i. 19	Lev. xxv. 18, 19; xxvi. 18, 25, "prosperity through obedience."
" i. 24	Ex. xxiii. 17; xxxiv. 23.
" iii. 1	
" x. 16, 23	
" xix. 4	
" iii. 9	Gen. xix. 5, "their sin as Sodom."
" iv. 5	Ex. xiii. 21; Num. ix. 15, 16, "a cloud by day," etc.
" v. 8	Deut. xix. 14, violent extension of estates.
" v. 10	" xxviii. 39, curse upon the vineyards.
" v. 23	" xvi. 19; Lev. xix. 15, unjust judgment.
" v. 26	" xxviii. 49, the swift unintelligible foe.
" xxxiii. 19	

The death year of Uzziah had been marked by the public entrance of Isaiah on his prophetic office. Fifty years of prosperity and fame had, in some respects, lowered the national character. Wealth had brought the corrupting influences of luxury with it into the higher classes; military glory had fostered haughty pride in the people as a whole. Public virtue was decaying, and the germs of a fatal degeneracy were visible in all classes alike, in the tendency to idolatry and superstition, which was only too marked.

Isaiah x. 26 " xi. 15, 16	Ex. xiv. 21, 22, the passage of the Red Sea.
" xii. 2 *b*.	Ex. xv. 2, Song of Moses quoted.
" xxx. 17	Deut. xxxii. 30; Lev. xxvi. 8, one thousand at the rebuke of one.
" xiii. 19	" xxix. 23, overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah.
" xxiv. 18 *c*.	Gen. vii. 11, "windows opened."
" xl. 2	Lev. xxvi. 41, 43, compare 34, "guilt paid off."
" xli. 4	Deut. xxxii. 39, "I am He."
" xliii. 13	" " " "none that rescueth out of My hand."
" xli. 8, 9 " li. 2	Gen. xi. 31–xii. 4, call of Abraham and Israel.
" xliii. 16, 17 " li. 9, 10 " lxiii. 11–13	Ex. xiv. 21–31, passage of the Red Sea.
" xliii. 27	Gen. xxv. 29–34, c. 27, Jacob's sins.
" xliv. 2	Deut. xxxii. 15; xxxiii. 5, 6, Jeshurun.
" xlviii. 19	Gen. xxii. 17; xxxii. 12, Israel as the sand.
" xlviii. 21	Ex. xvii. 5–7; Num. xx. 7–13, water from the rock.
" l. 1	" xxi. 7; Deut. xxiv. 1, law of divorce.
" li. 3	Gen. ii. 8, Eden.
" lii. 4	" xlvii. 4, compare xii. 10, Israel's guest-right in Egypt.
" lii. 12	Ex. xii. 11, 51; xiii. 21, 22, "in trembling haste;" Jehovah in the van and in the rear.
" liv. 9	Gen. viii. 21; ix. 11, the deluge and Jehovah's oath.
" lviii. 14	Deut. xxxii. 13, "riding over the heights of the land."
" lix. 10	" xxviii. 29, "groping like the blind."
" lxiii. 9	Ex. ii. 24; iii. 7; xxiii. 20–23, Jehovah's sympathy with Israel and the guidance of His angel.
" lxiii. 11	Deut. xxxii. 7, "remembering the days of old."
" lxii. 14	Ex. xxxiii. 14; Deut. iii. 20; xii. 9, "rest in Canaan."
" lxv. 22	Deut. xxviii. 30, a promise modelled on a threat.
" lxv. 25	Gen. iii. 14, dust, the serpent's food.
" li. 2	Notice of Sarah; liv. 9, of Noah.
" lxiii. 11	Notice of Moses and Aaron, shepherds of Israel, perhaps also, Miriam.

Isaiah, though still only a young man, already deeply pondered this state of things. The vassalage of Israel was a sad foreboding of the fate in reserve for Judah, if it did not listen to the counsels of the prophets, its faithful preachers. Joel, two generations before, had stirred the land, and through him and Jehoiada a great reformation had been brought about, culminating in the glorious period of Uzziah. But a reaction had gradually set in, like the ungodliness in the northern kingdom, against which Amos and Hosea had lifted up their voices. Penetrated with the solemnity of their utterances, Isaiah had caught their spirit. His thoughts dwelt on the spiritual state and temporal prospects of his people, till a lofty enthusiasm, such as marked those who received prophetic inspiration, filled his whole being. In this frame he, one day, visited the temple. There, the pealing trumpets, the hallelujahs of the choirs of Levites, and the cloud of incense from the Holy Place, intensified still more the religious emotions with which his soul was moved. Suddenly a vision was vouchsafed him, the first and last he is recorded to have received. He was at the moment standing before the priests' court—the Holy Place in front, and the mysterious Holy of Holies beyond. And now, while he gazed, it seemed as if the dimensions of the temple grew indefinitely greater. Through the wide gates of cedar, thrown open to let the priests enter to the golden altar of incense, the many-coloured veil of the hidden inner sanctuary appeared to be drawn aside, and in the mysterious gloom there rose before him an august vision of Jehovah sitting on His throne over the ark, which seemed standing on the clear sky, between earth and heaven. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, as becomes the spirituality of the Divine Essence, no attempt is made to describe the awful

Form that sat on it. But the skirts of His royal robes filled the great visionary temple which faded away into the eternities.[1] In the air, on each side of the throne, hovered mysterious guardians; two wings bearing them up, two veiling their faces in adoration, and two covering their feet, now naked, as became priestly service in the presence of the Almighty. His highest servants, they were there to minister to Him and proclaim His glory. As priests in the vast temple, they lifted their voices in lofty invocations; each calling to the other—

> Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of Hosts!
> The whole earth is full of His glory!

till the very posts of the gates, seen far off by the prophet, seemed to tremble with the sound, and the whole temple was filled with the incense of their praise.[2] The call of Isaiah to his prophetic office was a great moment in the history of the kingdom of God, and could not be more fittingly honoured than by the vision of the Almighty, thus seated in majesty, attended by His heavenly ministers, to give forth a commission of so weighty an importance in the advancement of His rule among men.[3] It was befitting, moreover, that the vision should mingle priestly service with its royal majesty, for it was no earthly king who was thus revealed, but God Himself.

Such a spectacle might well overpower mortal and sinful man. Isaiah had never before realized so fully the greatness of the Almighty, nor His awful holiness, and felt as if his human weakness and unworthiness must perish in so august a presence. "Woe is me," cries he, "surely I am undone,

[1] Ewald, *Propheten*, vol. i. 181.
[2] Rev. viii. 4.
[3] Ewald, *Propheten*, vol. i. p. 181.

for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah Sabaoth."[1] But while he fears that he will die, a seraph flies towards him to fit him for his great task. The embers of the altar glow at the holy words of adoration, as with a burning fire, and offer a fitting emblem of what was to follow. Taking up a coal from the heap and seeming to touch Isaiah's lips with it, the heavenly form thus consecrates them to the utterances of inspiration, and commissions the prophet-apostle of God. When therefore the mysterious voice of Jehovah now asks who will undertake to speak for Him to men, the hitherto trembling seer, filled with holy confidence, at once offers to do so.

But he little knows the task before him. In the words that follow, its difficulties are sadly revealed. He will indeed be a prophet to "this people," which God will no longer call *His;* but the result of his life-long work among them will only be to make them more perverse and less open to receive the words he brings.[2] Their foreseen rejection of his message must indeed have this effect; for to thrust away the truth is to destroy religious sensibility, and leave less faculty of repentance. "How long, O Lord, shall this blindness and perversity continue?" asks the newly consecrated; for prophecy had already foretold a time when Israel would return to its God. But the awful answer comes back from the heavens—It will last till the utter destruction of the Hebrew state; till the land be desolate, and the people carried off to another country by the enemy; whose name is not announced. The purifying fire of afflic-

[1] Isaiah had read or knew of such passages as Gen. xviii. 23 ff. Ex. xxxiii. 20. Judg. xiii. 22.

[2] Isa. vi. 9, 10, is five times quoted in the New Testament as realized in Christ's day, when the nation was near its doom.

tion will consume all but a remnant, but from them a better race, "a holy seed"—the true people of Jehovah—will arise, as new shoots spring from the stump of a felled terebinth or oak.[1] The vision now passed away, but Isaiah henceforth felt himself divinely appointed as the prophet of God.

[1] Isa. vi. 1–13.

CHAPTER XII.

AHAZ AND ISAIAH.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Zachariah, ...	B.C. 771–770	743	762–761
Shallum, ...	770	742	761
Menahem, ...	770–761	742–738	761–751
Pekahiah, ...	761–759	738–737	751–749
Pekah, ...	759–730	736–731	749–729
Hoshea, ...	730–722	731–722	719–710
Samaria taken, ...	722		See note in table before Chapter VIII

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Uzziah, ...	B.C. 810–758	780–739	800–748
Jotham, ...	758–742	750–735	748–732
Reigning for twelve years with his father.			
Ahaz, ...	742–727	735–715	732–716
Hezekiah, ...	727–698	714–686	716–687

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

Assurdanan, . .	B.C. 771–745	Shalmaneser IV.,	B.C. 727–722
Assur-nazir-pal,	753–746	Sargon, ...	722–705
Tiglath-pileser II. (Pul), . .	745–727	Sennacherib, . .	705–681

EGYPTIAN KINGS.

(Ethiopian Dynasty, the XXVth.)

SABAKO (So),[1] . . B.C. 727–719 | SABATOKA, . . . B.C. 719–705
TIRHAKAH, . . B.C. 705–687.

(These dates are only approximate.)

Menahem is named on an inscription of Tiglath-pileser (745–728), and must therefore have reigned later than the received chronology, here given, supposes. He was contemporary with Uzziah, who is proved to have been alive in B.C. 740 (p. 303, *n.*). Pekah's reign must therefore have been both shorter and later in opening, than the received chronology makes it. Schrader, *K. A. T.*, 227.

AHAZ, the son of Jotham, was a young man of twenty when he ascended the throne. His father, shrewd, practical, brave in war, and devout at all times, had left the kingdom strong, rich, and well organized.[2] Long continued prosperity had filled it with silver and gold,[3] and the army was in the highest efficiency. Its cavalry and chariots were especially famous;[4] and a large merchant navy of Tarshish ships, sailing from Elath, could boast their gilded prows and stems, and purple sails, and brought home rich cargoes from the distant East.[5] The districts east of the Jordan, regained by Uzziah, were still retained.[6] But though himself true to Jehovah, Jotham had been unable to check the increasing corruption of the age. The fondness of the people for their ancient high places[7]— which had in too many cases become more or less heathen, and even where dedicated to Jehovah, hindered the centralization of all public worship in Jerusalem, which was now the great aim of the

[1] 2 Kings xvii. 4.
[2] 2 Chron. xxvii. 3, 4. Isa. ii. 15.
[3] Isa. ii. 7.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Isa. ii. 6. The meaning given by Gesenius, Redslob, and Hitzig to the words translated "upon all pleasant pictures," A.V., are incorporated in the text.
[6] 2 Chron. xxvii. 5.
[7] Prof. J. P. Lesley, in *Man's Origin, etc.*, Boston, 1882, proposes as the derivation of "altar," the two words: al = *the*; tor = *hill*.

crown and priesthood—prevented his destroying them. Intercourse with the various nations round, through trade and extended empire, had, moreover, gradually "filled the land" with idols.[1] The introduction of the intellectual culture and the manufactures of Syria and Western Asia, had further led to that of soothsayers; diviners of the clouds from Philistia were common in Jerusalem,[2] and professors of the black arts abounded.[3] This unfaithfulness to Jehovah had been visited with heavy judgments, for as such the inroads of Pekah and Rezin were regarded.[4]

In Ahaz, "the Grasper," men soon found they had a king in every way the opposite of his father. Of his early training we know nothing, but his tastes shew that he must have grown up under the influence of the old heathen court-party; the worshippers of foreign manners, to whom the ancient simplicity of the land, and its hereditary faith, were vulgar and provincial, in comparison with the refinement and gorgeous idolatry of Phœnicia and Assyria. Under this faction—the counterpart of the Persian and Macedonian parties of after ages, at Athens—Ahaz, while an Israelite in blood, shewed himself an alien in all other respects. Heathen foreigners were raised by him to high offices in the state.[5] As early as the days of Solomon, Assyrian culture had gained a footing in Judæa, through the Phœnician architects and artists employed by him. The House of the Forest of Lebanon had been copied from the great buildings of Nineveh; for its proportions, its cedar roofing, its numerous columns, its windows and doors squared at the top, are in exact correspondence with the Throne Room of an Assyrian palace. The separation of the various regal

[1] Isa. ii. 8. [2] Isa. ii. 6.
[3] Isa. iii. 3, translated "eloquent orators," as in the text.
[4] 2 Kings xv. 37. See p. 266. [5] Graetz, vol. ii. p. 115.

edifices into several distinct groups; the large courts inside; their being paved with stone, and the employment of stone slabs to face the palace walls,[1] are also characteristics of the royal buildings of Nineveh. The overlaying of the temple with pure gold, so marvellous to us, was familiar to Babylonians, Assyrians, and Medes. Its ornamentation; its cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, its pomegranates and lions, were thoroughly Assyrian. The height of the pillars Jachin and Boaz; their size and complicated capitals, have parallels at Persepolis. The lions that guarded the steps of Solomon's throne recall the lion figures at the Assyrian palace gates, and the throne of ivory is illustrated by the fragments of ivory furniture found at Nineveh.

Ahaz, however, went very much further. A man of taste, as it was then understood, he sought to make Jerusalem rival the heathen capitals of the day. Gold and silver idols glittered in every part.[2] An Assyrian altar, which at a later period he saw at Damascus, struck his fancy, and a copy of it was raised in Jerusalem from drawings sent thither by the king.[3] It was apparently of hewn stone, three-sided, and sculptured, and thus very different from those of the Hebrews.[4] This special triumph of art, as the king regarded it, henceforth became by his orders, the great or chief altar, taking the place of the brazen altar of Solomon, which was removed nearer the Holy Place to let its substitute stand where it had been, though, after a time, it was again moved and put alongside this new one. It had been erected in 732, after Ahaz had returned from doing homage to Tiglath-pileser, at Damascus, and was dedicated to Jehovah by a thanksgiving

[1] 1 Kings vii. 9. [2] Isa. ii. 20; xxx. 22; xxxi. 7. [3] 2 Kings xvi. 10.
[4] Rawlinson's *Great Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 273.

and sacrifices which Ahaz himself presented, superseding the high priest, and claiming the traditional right to perform priestly acts in his own person, as Solomon had done, and as was done by his great standard of kingship, the mighty ruler of Nineveh. The daily morning and evening sacrifices, for the nation, the king, and then for individuals, were, henceforth, made at this altar, the legal service of Jehovah being thus duly maintained, though, for himself, the king followed also the worship of heathen gods. The discarded brazen altar still, however, found a minor use, for the king came to it when he thought fit to enquire, as at an oracle, perhaps by prayer, what might be the will of Heaven in given cases.[1] We learn also from Chronicles that, at least at an earlier time, Ahaz had sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, by whose help, as he fancied, Rezin had overcome him, that they might thus, possibly, be bribed to help him, in turn.[2] To these innovations the high priest Uriah, in contrast to the inflexible spirit of his predecessor under Uzziah, lent himself, apparently without opposition; nor does he seem to have resisted other changes to which it ultimately led the way. The brazen bulls beneath the great laver were, at a later time, removed, to get the copper for the tribute to Assyria: a stone base being put in their place —the small brazen lavers on wheels, the metal canopy over the royal stand in the temple court, and the brazen ornaments of the royal entrance to the temple, sharing the same fate.

In his passion for everything Assyrian, as if to shew his gross servility as well as taste, Ahaz, still further, introduced the whole system of Mesopotamian idolatry. The worship of the sun and the moon and all the host of heaven,

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 15, see v. 12. Graetz. [2] 2 Chron. xxviii. 23.

as followed on the Tigris, was adopted by royal authority in Jerusalem.[1] Snow-white sacred horses and magnificent chariots, dedicated, as in Assyria, to the Sun-god, and used on his festivals—the opening days of the various seasons[2]—to go out to greet the sun at his rise, were stalled in some of the chambers originally built for the priests and for the sacred vessels, etc., at the entrance of the temple.[3] For the worship of the planets and of the signs of the zodiac,[4] in Assyrian fashion, altars were built on the flat top of the palace, and were soon imitated on the roofs of private houses.[5] A dial was erected, doubtless after an Assyrian pattern, near the palace, consisting apparently of a flight of graduated steps, to mark the daily progress of the solar shadow; their top serving as a watch-tower from which the movements of the heavens could be observed, for idolatrous purposes, by night.[6] The courtiers prided themselves on learning the Assyrian language, which was related to the Aramaic or Syrian, and thus easy for Hebrews.[7] Nor was this passion for copying Nineveh without some advantages. It apparently introduced a better mode of dividing time, and a higher taste in decorating the mansions of the great and in the shapes of furniture and vessels; for in this, as already stated, the Assyrians were the teachers even of the Greeks.[8] A new style of house architecture also was brought into fashion in Jerusalem.[9] But the evil which was learned far out-balanced the good, for the king's example, in worshipping foreign gods, was only too widely followed.

[1] 2 Kings xxiii. 5.
[2] Jewish tradition.
[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 11. Such horses were at times sacrificed to the sun. Keil, *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 40. Ewald, *Geschichte*, vol. iii. p. 664.
[4] For "planets," 2 Kings xxiii. 5, Jewish tradition reads "signs of the zodiac."
[5] Zeph. i. 5. Jer. xix. 13. Ewald, vol. iii. pp. 666-668.
[6] Isa. xxxviii. 8. Herod., ii. 109.
[7] 2 Kings xviii. 26.
[8] Layard's *Nineveh*, vol. i. p. 342.
[9] Jer. xxii. 14.

Altars to heathen gods were planted at the corners of the streets, that incense might be burned on them by the passers by.[1] An Asherah—the synonym of gross impurity—was erected in the temple itself.[2] Wretched beings of both sexes, devoted to its foul service, had lodgings in the temple chambers; the women making the hangings, in the sacred courts, for the gaudy tents beneath which its orgies were carried on.[3] High places dedicated to the evil spirits of the desert[4] were erected at the gates of Jerusalem and in other towns and villages.[5] The worship of gods of other nations was everywhere adopted, not only in all existing sanctuaries over the land, but in new ones. The old temples or high places, built by Solomon on the top of the Mount of Olives, for Ashtoreth, Chemosh, and Moloch, still remained, and were now put once more to their former use.[6] A new sanctuary to the last of these hateful idols was also added, in the valley of Hinnom, under the walls of Jerusalem, on a spot henceforth known, in contempt, amongst the faithful, as Tophet, "the spitting." Here, a great brass image of the god was erected, with a furnace within it, a hollow-topped altar beneath its extended arms receiving the children offered to it, when they rolled from them into the flames.[7] Nor can Ahaz be accused of insincerity in his devotion even to this dreadful superstition, for he gave the best proof of earnestness, by sacrificing at least one of his sons to the hideous idol, at some unknown crisis of his life.[8] The worship of Jehovah was, meanwhile, more and more neglected, till, towards the close of the reign, the great doors of the temple were at last shut; the sacred lamps left unlighted; no incense offered, and the whole interior left to

[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 4.
[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 6.
[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 7.
[4] Hebrew = satyrs.
[5] 2 Kings xxiii. 8; xvii. 9.
[6] 2 Kings xxiii. 13.
[7] See vol. iii. p. 400.
[8] 2 Kings xvi. 3. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

decay and neglect.[1] Instead of the white-robed priests of the national faith, crowds of those of the heathen gods, clad in black, thronged the streets and roads.[2]

Such a reign—so feeble, so corrupting—was, in proportion, inglorious and disastrous. Invasions by Rezin of Damascus, and Pekah of Samaria, were followed, as we have seen,[3] by Edom throwing off the Hebrew yoke, and carrying away many of the people as slaves; by the Philistines seizing the towns of Ahaz on the sea-coast plain; the loss of Elath, the Jewish port on the Red Sea; and, above all, by the invoking aid from Assyria, which made Judah its vassal henceforth. In the midst of such disasters and so much public corruption, the tongue of Isaiah could not be silent. How often he addressed the people we have no means of knowing, but one great discourse, delivered some time before the capture of Elath, has been preserved.[4]

Beginning by what seems to be a quotation from some older but unknown prophet, from whom Micah also, at a later time, borrowed the same passage more fully,[5] he prepared his hearers for the terrible judgments he was presently to foretell, by repeating an earlier promise of a glorious future, if they returned to the worship of God.

The address is introduced thus:

"II. 1. The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw, concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

"2. It has been prophesied" (said he, if we may amplify his words), "that 'it shall come to pass in days to come that the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be made the highest (in honour) of all mountains, and be raised (in fame) above the hills, and all nations shall stream

[1] 2 Kings xvi. 17, 18. 2 Chron. xxviii. 24; xxix. 3, 7, 16, 17. The closing of the temple gates and the extinction of the lamps is still kept a fast on the 18th Ab—the end of July or the beginning of August.

[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 5. "Black-robed," Hebrew. See Chamar: Mühlau.

[3] Page 266. [4] Isa. ii.–v. [5] Isa. ii. 2–4. Micah iv. 1–4.

to it.' 3. And that 'they will set out (for it), saying, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the House of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths. For out of Zion instruction (in His law) shall go forth, and His word from Jerusalem. 4. (From its sacred heights) He shall judge between the nations, and give law to many peoples. And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'

"5. (But these glorious promises depend for their fulfilment on yourselves.) Up, then, O House of Jacob, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah! 6. Alas! O Jehovah, Thou hast (for the time) cast off Thy people, the House of Jacob! For they are filled with sorcery; they are diviners of the clouds, and rain-makers, like the Philistines, and they go hand in hand with the children of strangers. 7. Their land is filled with silver and gold; there is no end of their wealth. It abounds with horses and in chariots without number. 8. It is full of idol gods. The people worship the work of their hands; that which their own fingers have made. 9. For this will the poor be bowed down, and the rich be humbled, so that they are unworthy to approach Thee or be Thy people, O Jehovah! (They have brought on themselves Thy wrath) and Thou wilt not forgive them!

"10. Flee, therefore, ye people, into the rocks, and hide yourselves in the dust, from the terrors of Jehovah, and from the greatness of His majesty! 11. For the pride of the people will be humbled, and the haughtiness of the great ones brought low, and Jehovah alone will be exalted in that day.

"12. For Jehovah of Hosts has (indeed, fixed) a day to (judge and bring low) all that is proud and high; all that is now in honour; to bring them low. 13. His fury shall burst upon all the cedars of Lebanon, now so proud; all the oaks of Bashan (now so strong); all the lofty mountains and high hills; 14. every lofty tower and fenced wall; 16. on all the great Tarshish ships and the pride of the eye.[1] 17. Verily, the pride of the people will be humbled, and the loftiness of the great be abased, and Jehovah alone exalted in that day.

"18. (In that day) the idols—(those no-gods)—shall utterly disappear. 19. And men shall flee into the caverns of the rocks and pits of the earth (to escape) from the terrors of Jehovah and from the greatness of

[1] Ewald has for this, "high obelisks;" Noyes has, "and all that is delightful to the eye;" Eichhorn has, "all splendid monuments." The imagery as a whole is designed to paint the impending ruin of the rich and great of the land.

His majesty, when He rises (from His throne in wrath) to make the earth tremble before Him.

"20. In that day every one will throw his idols of silver and his idols of gold which they made to worship, to the (unclean) moles and bats, 21. and will himself flee to the clefts of the rocks and the fissures of the (lofty) crags, from the terrors of Jehovah and the greatness of His majesty, when He rises (from His throne in wrath) to make the earth tremble before Him.

"22. Cease[1] then from (confidence in) man, whose life is only the breath of his nostrils! For how little is he to be accounted of! III. 1. For,[2] behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts (already) takes away from Jerusalem and from Judah their stay and support; all on whom its bread and its water depend:[3] 2. hero and warrior, judge and prophet, soothsayer and elder, 3. the captain of fifty and the man of position, the counsellor, the skilled artificer,[4] and the skilled enchanter. 4. And (hereafter), says He, I will make youths their princes and (with) childish waywardness will they rule over them.[5] 5. The people will oppress one another; man against man, neighbour against neighbour. The lad will turn fiercely on the old man; the common man on the noble. 6. And if a (well-meaning) man take hold of his brother, in his father's house, saying, 'You have a coat! Be our ruler: take this ruin of everything, (wreck of the kingdom,) under your charge,' 7. he will lift up his voice and say, 'I will not be the healer (of the land), for I have neither bread nor clothing in my house. Ye cannot set me to be ruler of the people!'

"8. For Jerusalem is sunk into ruin and Judah is fallen; for both their words and deeds are against Jehovah, to provoke the eyes of His majesty. 9. Their brazen[6] looks witness against them; they boast of their sins, without shame, like Sodom. Woe to their souls, for they have done themselves evil! 10. 'Tell the righteous' (says Jehovah), 'that it shall be well with him, for he shall eat the fruit of his doings. 11. But woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for what his hands have earned shall be given him!' 12. As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women lord it over them.[7] My people, your leaders lead you astray, and destroy the way of thy paths.

[1] This verse is omitted in the Septuagint. [2] Isa. iii. 1 ff.

[3] God is about to lead them all into exile, and has already cut down many of them. Ewald and others retain this last clause; Hitzig thinks it a gloss.

[4] Eichhorn. Cheyne.

[5] Ahaz was twenty when he became king; Manasseh was twelve.

[6] Eichhorn. Ewald. [7] A young prince ruled by his mother or his rival wives.

"13. (For this cause) Jehovah has stood up to judge; stands up to judge the nations. 14. He will enter into judgment with the elders of His people and with its princes—(accusing them thus): 'So, then, ye have eaten up the vineyard; the plunder of the poor is in your houses! 15. What mean ye by treading down My people, and grinding the faces of the wretched?' saith Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts."

The prophet has denounced the sins of the men; he now turns to those of the women.

"III. 16. Thus, also, saith Jehovah, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with neck thrown back, and wanton eyes, taking short, mincing steps and making their anklets tinkle as they go: 17. for this, the Lord will make their heads bald,[1] and give them over to be dishonoured by the enemy.[2] 18. In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling anklets;[3] the golden disks and crescents (hung on their hair, their foreheads, and their necks);[4] 19. the ear-rings, the arm-chains, and the fine veils; 20. the coronets, the stepping-chains, and the costly girdles; the scent-bottles and the amulets; 21. the finger and nose-rings; 22. the gala dresses and the costly mantles; the cloaks and the purses; 23. the hand mirrors and the fine linen underclothes; the turbans and the large veils. 24. (In that day,) instead of perfume there will be rottenness; instead of a costly girdle, a rope; instead of finely dressed hair, baldness; instead of a wide mantle, only sacking wrapped round them; and instead of beauty, your (captor's) mark branded (on your brow). 25. Your men (O Zion) will fall by the sword; your mighty men in battle; 26. and the gates

[1] Smite them with a scab. [2] Delitzsch (in effect).

[3] Rings of gold and silver, often hollow, to increase the sound, and at times hung with small bells, are still worn round the ankles in Egypt and the East; the tinkling they make being thought an attraction. The steps are at times also kept short by ornamental chains from anklet to anklet, mentioned in this verse as stepping-chains.

[4] Very small ornaments of gold tied on silken threads are still worn in the hair in Egypt. Numerous braids fall over the shoulders, and the threads, resplendent with the spangles, are intermixed with these. Lane. Disks, etc., were also, apparently, hung on the forehead and neck. The A.V. has "round tires like the moon." In the Samaritan district you still meet among the peasant women a head-dress apparently the same as the prophet thus denounces. It is of a horseshoe form, and is made up of large silver coins which overlap, a crimson head-veil being often worn with it. It is worn only by married women. Little terra-cotta statues of Ashtoreth found in Cyprus and Phœnicia have just the same head-dress, so that it may have been in honour of her that it was first worn; a usage that would exasperate the worshippers of Jehovah.

(of Zion) shall sigh and wail, and she will sit, desolate, on the earth. IV. 1. And [1] seven women will lay hold in that day on one man, saying, 'We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothing;[2] only let us be called by thy name (and be your wives), to take away the shame (of being unmarried and childless).'"

But the people of God cannot perish for ever. The prophet has proclaimed the terrors of judgment; he must relieve the picture by once more reminding them of the glorious promises of the future.

"IV. 2. In that day the Branch of Jehovah shall be for an ornament and glory; and the fruit of the land a pride and adornment for the remnant of Israel; 3. and he who is left in Zion, and remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy; all (I mean) written in the town roll as living citizens of Jerusalem, 4. when the Lord shall have washed away the defilement of the daughters of Zion, and cleansed away the blood-guiltiness of Jerusalem by the storm of judgment and of fire. 5. Then will Jehovah create on the whole of Mount Zion, and upon her festal assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke, with the brightness of a flaming fire, by night, for over all her glory shall be a radiant cloud (of divine protection),[3] 6. and this canopy shall be a pavilion, for shade from the heat by day, and for a shelter from storm and from rain."

The prophet once more varies his address.

"V. 1. Come, I will sing of my Beloved;[4] a song of my Beloved about (Judah) His vineyard. My Beloved had a vineyard on a very fruitful slope.[5] 2. And He dug it well, cleared it of stones, planted it with choice vines, built a tower in its midst, to guard it, and hewed out a wine-press, and He looked that it should yield Him grapes; but, behold, only wild grapes came!

"3. Now, then, ye dwellers in Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard! 4. What was there still to be done to My vineyard, that I had not done to it? Why, when I hoped it should

[1] Isa. iv. 1, ff.

[2] Exod. xxi. 10. The husband was bound to give a second wife her "food and raiment," etc., no less than the first.

[3] "A nimbus that keeps off the world from her (Zion)." Ewald, p. 195, *Propheten*. Perhaps a reference to the wilderness life.

[4] Isa. v. 1, ff.

[5] "On a horn, the son of fatness." Hebrew.

yield grapes, has it only brought forth wild grapes? 5. Now, then, I will tell you what I will do to My vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it will be eaten down ; I will break down its wall, and it will be trodden under foot! 6. I will make a clean end of it: it will neither be pruned nor hoed, but will grow over with thorns and thistles. I will also command the clouds that they do not rain on it. 7. For the vineyard of Jehovah Sabaoth is the House of Israel: the men of Judah are the planting in which He delighted. And He hoped for justice, but, behold, oppression ; for righteousness, and, lo, there is only the cry of woe!"

Now follows, in detail, a denunciation of the evil fruits the vineyard has brought forth.

"V. 8. Woe to them who join house to house, and lay field to field, till there is no more room, and they alone have houses in the (depopulated) land. 9. In my ears has Jehovah Sabaoth spoken (concerning them). Of a truth, many (grand) houses shall become a desolation: great and fair, they shall be without an inhabitant! 10. For ten yoke of vineyard land[1] will bear only a bath,[2] and a homer[3] full of seed will yield only a tenth as much!

"11. Woe to them who rise early in the morning, to run after strong drink; who sit late into the night till wine inflame them! 12. The harp and psaltery, the timbrel and flute, and wine, are the revels they like, but they pay no regard to the work of Jehovah, and do not see what His hand is doing (in our midst)! 13. Therefore My people will go into exile before they know it, and their rich men become hungry and famished, and the swarming crowd burn with thirst. 14. Therefore the underworld will open wide its mouth and gape its jaws beyond measure, and swallow down the glory of Jerusalem, and its drunken tumult, and its revelry, and its merry-making crowd. 15. Then will the mean man be abased, and the high be brought low, and proud eyes be humbled. 16. But Jehovah Sabaoth will be exalted by His judgments on them—the holy God will shew Himself holy through righteousness. 17. And (the) flocks (of the Arabs) shall feed (over the land, as if it were their pastures of the wilderness), and wandering shepherds roam over the waste estates of the rich.[4]

"18. Woe to them who (are yoked to iniquity like oxen to a cart), and

[1] A yoke = as much as a yoke of oxen plough in a day.
[2] About seven gallons.
[3] About thirty-two pecks.
[4] This seems the sense of the verse.

drag it after them as if with cords of ungodliness, and their sin as with cart-ropes: 19. that say, 'Let Jehovah hasten; let Him hurry on His work that we may see it: let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel come on and draw near, that we may know it.'

"20. Woe to them who call evil good, and good evil; who give forth darkness for light, and light for darkness; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21. Woe to them who are wise in their own eyes; and knowing in their own interest!

"22. Woe to them that are mighty to drink wine; great men to mingle strong drink: 23. who clear the guilty for a bribe and take the rights of worthy men from them! 24. As the tongue of the fire licks up stubble: as dry grass sinks down into the flame; their root shall be rottenness and their blossom fly off like dust; for they have despised the Law of Jehovah Sabaoth, and contemned the word of the Holy One of Israel!

ASSYRIAN STANDARDS.

"25. On account of all this, the wrath of Jehovah is kindled against His people, and He stretches out His hand over them and smites them, till the mountains tremble, and men's carcasses lie as offal in the streets. Yet, for all this, His wrath is not appeased, but His hand is stretched out still! 26. He lifts up a banner to call the heathen from afar,[1] and hisseth to them from the ends of the earth (as a bee-master hisseth to gather his swarm), and lo! they come with swift haste! 27. None among them is weary or stumbles; they spare no time for slumber or sleep: the belt of their waist is never loosed, the thong of their shoes is never undone! 28. Their arrow heads are sharpened, their bows bent; the hoofs of their horses are like flint;[2] their chariot wheels rush on like a whirlwind. 29. Their roar is like the roar of a lioness; they roar like young lions and growl hoarsely, and seize their prey and carry it off, and no one can rescue it. 30. And they shall roar against Judah in that day like the roaring of the sea, and when men look over the earth there will be thick darkness and sorrow; the light will be veiled by the darkening clouds!"

[1] The Assyrians.

[2] Horses were not shod in antiquity. The hardness of the hoof was therefore of vital importance. Hence Homer's "brazen footed horses." A horse's hoof, I am informed by a competent authority, grows very hard when it has never been shod.

This magnificent oration was lost on the weak Ahaz. His terror at the invasion of Pekah and Rezin, and at the attacks of Edom and the Philistines, had spread, moreover, to the people, till their "hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."[1] The king, as a last hope, contemplated calling in Assyrian aid, and thus bringing to his very doors the dreaded enemy whom his father and grandfather had valiantly kept at a distance. In this critical conjuncture Isaiah once more came forward. Prudence, calmness, and trust in Jehovah were above all things necessary for Ahaz. He must do nothing rashly. Reflection would shew that foes already so weak, and now threatened by Tiglath-pileser,[2] could not succeed, if met courageously; and the prophet, besides, knew, from Divine assurance, that Jehovah would overthrow any attempts against Jerusalem and the House of David. The city was still safe from capture by a sudden attack; indeed, the watchful confidence of Isaiah and his friends guaranteed this.

Resolved to urge his convictions on Ahaz, in the hope of deterring him from his meditated action, which he knew would be ruinous, Isaiah went out with his son, who bore the symbolic name of Shear-Jashub—"a remnant shall return" (to Jehovah)—to meet the king, who was apparently accustomed to drive out along the Joppa road on the west side of Zion, past the "upper pool," now the Birket Mamilla. An aqueduct from this ran east towards the town, and close to the end of this, where it leaves the pool, was a field, then, as now, used by the citizens, on account of its nearness to the water, as a washing and bleaching ground,[3]

[1] Isa. vii. 2. [2] The same as Pul. This is to be kept in mind.

[3] Delitzsch, p. 125. Furrer (*Bib. Lex.*, vol. v. p. 468) and Menke (*Bib. Atlas*, Pl. VI.) place it on the north-east of the city, not on the west. Dr. Young also thinks it was on the north. *Dict. of Bible*, vol. i. p. 636. In the text I have adopted Delitzsch's view, as we know of a pool in that case, but not in the other.

and by the fullers for felting and cleansing their newly-woven woollen cloths. Here, outside the walls, the prophet, as he expected, encountered Ahaz, and having stopped his chariot, proceeded to deliver to him his Divine commission.

"VII. 4. Take heed,"[1] said he, "that you keep calm. Do not fear or be faint-hearted on account of these two fag ends of smoking fire-brands; for the rage of Rezin and Syria, or of Pekah, the king of Samaria, that son of Remaliah (a low-born man). 5. Have no fear though Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have planned evil against you, saying, 6. 'Let us go up against Judah and distress it, and conquer it for ourselves, and put the son of Tabeal—(a Syrian)—as king in Jerusalem.' 7. (You may be perfectly at ease, for) thus saith the Lord Jehovah: 'The scheme shall neither stand, nor succeed. 8. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin (and within sixty-five years Ephraim shall be broken as a nation).[2] And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria, Remaliah's son.' If you and Judah have no faith in Jehovah your kingdom shall not continue, any more than that of Ephraim."

To this dignified counsel Ahaz seems to have given no reply; at least, none is recorded. He had a secret in his breast which he dared not divulge to Isaiah. He had determined to call in the aid of Assyria. But God would not cast off, as yet, even such an unworthy son of David.

"If you wish a sign that I speak for Jehovah," resumed the prophet, perhaps on another occasion, "ask one from Him; He is your God. Ask it to be given from the underworld of Sheol or from the heavens above."[3] But Ahaz, affecting a humility he rarely shewed in his daily life, declined the invitation; "He would not ask, nor put Jehovah thus to the test." Isaiah was thus left to continue the conference. He no longer, however, addressed Ahaz indi-

[1] Isa. vii. 4, ff.

[2] This clause is very generally regarded as an interpolation, and omitted.

[3] Isa. vii. 10, 11.

vidually, but, through him, the collective royal family, who in their different branches, as in Egypt, were a very numerous and powerful body, and engrossed the high offices of the State, especially the judicial functions.[1] Turning to those in the royal escort, he thus began:

"VII. 13. Hear, I pray you, ye House of David![2] Is it too small a matter for you to weary me, a man (by paying no heed to my words); will you also weary my God (by refusing to believe without seeing, even when a sign is offered you)? 14. Therefore Jehovah Himself will give you a sign (unasked). Behold, the Virgin[3] is with child and will bear a son, and call his name Immanuel. 15. When he is old enough to choose between evil and good he shall have only curdled milk and honey[4] to eat. 16. For before he knows either evil or good, the land whose two kings you have in such dread shall be laid waste. 17. (Still more,) Jehovah will bring on thee and on thy people, and on thy father's House (for thy alliance with Assyria), days such as have not come since the time when Ephraim broke away from Judah—(He shall bring against thee) the king of Assyria (whose help you seek)! 18. And it shall come to pass on that day, that Jehovah will hiss (like a bee-master to his swarm),[5] for the flies in the farthest part of the canals of Egypt, and to the bees in the land of Assyria,[6] 19. and they will come, all of them, and settle in the steep mountain valleys, and in the clefts of the rocks, and in all the thorn bushes, and in all the pastures. 20. In that day Jehovah shall shave with a razor, that is to be hired from beyond the (Great) River—that is, by the king of

[1] Jer. xxi. 11, 12. [2] Isa. vii. 13, ff.

[3] "The Virgin." Delitzsch. Ewald. Key. Louth. Septuagint. Pesh. Vulgate. "The damsel." Naegelsbach. Hitzig. Noyes. "The young woman." Cheyne. The discussion for and against the Messianic import of the sign, in Delitzsch, is the best and fullest from the accepted orthodox point of view, which I think the right one.

[4] The only food left in the land. See ver. 22. The age meant depends on the sense of "knowing evil from good." A child when a few years old knows right from wrong, but the full strength of intelligent moral convictions is rather the characteristic of opening manhood. The latter would cover the dates of the destruction of Damascus and Samaria, which might well have as an indirect result, the desolation of many parts of the southern kingdom by the presence of a corps of the invaders.

[5] In the East swarms of bees are made to settle by a hissing sound from the bee-master. They fly towards it and alight on some branch close by.

[6] Egypt is the land of flies, its moist soil favouring insect life. Assyria, with its hills and woods, was famous for its bees.

Assyria—the head and the hair of the feet (of Judah), and sweep away even the beard.[1] 21. And (so utterly shall the land be wasted) in that day (that) a man's herd and flock will be (no more than) a young cow —(the strong grown cows having been carried off by the enemy)—and two ewes: 22. (and so desolate shall it be), so grown everywhere into pasture, that the curdled milk of these will be his (staple) food.[2] All, indeed, who are left in the country (then one great lonely grazing field) shall have (only) this and (the) honey of the swarming multitudes of wild bees to sustain them. 23. And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place where (magnificent) vineyards grew, of a thousand vines, worth each year a thousand shekels, will be overgrown with thorns and briars. 24. And (so rank and solitary will these be, that) men will only venture (on account of the wild beasts lurking in them, to go) among them armed with arrows and the bow, for all the land will be given up to thorns and briars. 25. And as to the hills, once hoed and worked so carefully, the peasant will not go on them for fear of the thorns and briars.[3] Oxen will be let loose on them, and they will be left for sheep and goats to tread and eat down."

The mysterious sign of the birth of Immanuel did not, however, exhaust the patient tenderness of God to His

[1] The "hired razor" was Pul. To shave off the beard and hair of the head, was the greatest possible humiliation, and is here used as a symbol of this.

[2] Curdled milk—leben—is a favourite drink in Western Asia. Milk was, indeed, one of the chief articles of food in ancient Israel, as at this time it is the principal nourishment of the Arabs. Those of the south of Palestine, in the heart of the desert of the Tih, away from lines of travel, live almost entirely on the milk of their camels and sheep, and in many other parts of the desert milk is the only food obtainable by the Bedouin. Palmer, indeed, heard of a case where an Arab had tasted neither water nor solid food for three years. While the flocks and herds have plenty of pasture, their masters do without any drink but their milk, to a large extent, so that an Arab encampment is pitched rather where the pasture is good than from having water near it.

In Moab sour or fresh milk is always plentiful, and is freely offered to a visitor, but one often finds, on asking for water, that there has been none in the encampment for days. When Abraham gave his guests curdled and fresh milk and the calf he had dressed, he treated them exactly as a Bedouin sheik would now treat visitors he wished specially to honour, the killing the calf being a great compliment. Jacob, "a plain man living in tents," would naturally think it a great blessing to promise Judah that "his teeth should be white with milk." Moses speaks in his last song, of curdled milk of kine, and milk of sheep, as special glories of the land given to Israel, and Jael did just what an Arab woman would do to day, and as has been done more than once to myself, when she opened a skin bottle of leben, and gave some of it to Sisera.

[3] Delitzsch, and others.

people. Unwilling to cast them off, other signs were added, which Isaiah thus records:

"VIII. 1. Then Jehovah said to me,[1] 'Take a great roll and write in it, in common characters:[2] ("This is inscribed) to (one to be called) Speedy plunder, early spoil."' 2. And I took as trustworthy witnesses, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of Jeberechiah. 3. And I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bare a son. Then said Jehovah to me, 'Call his name "Speedy plunder, early spoil;"[3] 4. for before the boy will know enough to cry "Father" or "Mother," the wealth of Damascus[4] and the spoil of Samaria will be carried off by (the armies of) the king of Assyria.'

"5. And Jehovah spake also to me again, saying: 6. 'Because this people of Samaria despises the waters of Siloah[5] that go softly—the peaceful rule of Jehovah, and the House of David—and rejoices in the alliance between Rezin and (Pekah) the son of Remaliah; 7. therefore, behold! the Lord will bring on them the flood of the great and mighty Euphrates—the king of Assyria and all his forces—and it shall swell over all its channels, and overflow all its banks, 8. and sweep on (through Israel and Syria, even) through Judah, flooding and streaming on till it reaches the neck, and the spreading out of its waters shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.'[6]

"9. Rage ye, then, O ye Syrians and people of Israel (at Judah); ye shall be broken in pieces! Listen, all ye far-off places of the earth! Gird yourselves, ye foes (Damascus and Samaria). Ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves; ye shall be broken in pieces! 10. Take

[1] Isa. viii. 1, ff. [2] Ewald. Delitzsch.

[3] Such complex religious names were not uncommon among the Hebrews. Thus: Jushab-hesed, "Love is returned," 1 Chron. iii. 20; Hazelelponi, "(God) is the present protection," 1 Chron. iv. 3; Romamti-ezer, "I have praised the help," 1 Chron. xxv. 4. The names of many of the Assyrian kings are also of this kind.

[4] Damascus fell in 732. The eastern provinces of Samaria were plundered two years earlier.

[5] The brook under the walls of Jerusalem is used as a symbol of the temple and the House of David. Siloah flows from the Virgin's Fountain up the valley of Jehoshaphat, through an ancient tunnel, to the south-east corner of the city hill. Its stream issues from the rock, intermittently, when a hollow basin has become so filled with water that the opening from its farther edge acts as a siphon. Thus it flows softly; its tunnel having only a gentle stream in it at any time.

[6] Assyria flooded and destroyed Syria and Israel entirely. Judah was invaded, but Jerusalem, like its head, rose above the waters, and the land was saved in the end, for a time. Isaiah thinks of "Immanuel" (chapter vii. 14) as a pledge of this deliverance. "God is with" Judah.

counsel together (to take Jerusalem itself, after overrunning the land); it will come to nothing. Give the command; it shall not be carried through, for 'God is with us.'[1]

"11. For thus has Jehovah spoken to me, with a strong hand filling me with His power, and warning me not to go in the way of this people, saying: 12. 'Ye shall not dignify what this people call a "league" or "plot" (against Me and the House of David), with that name: nor shall ye fear (Syria and Samaria, the objects of) their terror, nor let them be your dread. 13. Honour Jehovah Sabaoth alone, as the Holy One: let Him alone be your fear and your dread. 14. (In that case) He will be a refuge for you (and shew Himself holy by protecting you). But to both Judah and Israel He will be a stone of stumbling and a rock of bitterness; to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a gin and a net. 15. Many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken and snared, and taken![2]

"16. Bind up the roll (on which you have written these My words); seal the teaching (it contains for use) among my disciples.'

"17. As for me," continues the prophet, speaking for himself, "I will wait on Jehovah, who now hides His face from the House of Jacob, and I will look for Him. 18. Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given me are for signs and portents in Israel, from Jehovah Sabaoth, who dwells on Mount Zion. Our very names, given us by Him, are unfailing promises. Mine is 'the salvation of God;' those of my children are 'A remnant shall return,' 'God with us,' and 'Speedy plunder, early spoil.' 19. When, therefore, they say to you, 'Seek counsel from the consulters of the dead, and at the wizards that chirp and mutter their spells' (give them this answer): 'Should not a people inquire at their own God? (What folly to seek the living Jehovah by consulting the shades of dead men)—to seek guidance for living men from ghosts! (Shall a people which, like Judah, has for its God the living Jehovah, turn from Him to consult dead idols?)[3] 20. (Instead of this, let your watchword be:) 'To the teaching and testimony' (go to them, not to idols or sorcerers; go to the prophets, the spokesmen for God). If they will not accept this word, no morning dawn is before them.

"21. (In the evil days when they are driven from their homes) they will wander through the land, hard bestead and hungry; and when

[1] News of the approach of the Assyrians reached the Syrians and Israelites when they were besieging Jerusalem.

[2] In the Assyrian invasions.

[3] The senses of various versions are incorporated in the text.

thus famished, they shall murmur bitterly in their hearts and curse their king and (Jehovah) their God.[1] And whether they look up to the heavens, or 22. over the land, behold, there will be only sorrow and gloom; distress and darkness around; to distress and darkness will they be given over!

"IX. 1. But this remnant of the people, saved by God for Himself, shall not be thus in misery for ever.[2] In years lately past Jehovah brought sorrow to Zebulon and Naphtali (by the invasion of the Assyrians). But hereafter He will bring them to honour throughout the regions on the way to the sea (Naphtali—the west side of the Lake of Galilee), the country beyond Jordan, and (the half-heathen district of Kabul or) Galilee far north, on the waters of Hulch,[3] from which the inhabitants have been so recently carried off into captivity). 2. The people that walked in darkness see a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, on them has light shone. 3. Thou, O Jehovah, hast multiplied the nation once more: Thou hast prepared for it great joy. They rejoice before Thee like the joy of a harvest-home,[4] or as the warrior when he divides the spoil. 4. For Thou hast broken their grievous yoke, and the stick of (their taskmasters, with which) their shoulder (was beaten), as in the day of Gideon's great triumph over Midian! 5. For all the harness of the soldier noisily girding himself for battle,[5] and the war-cloak rolled in blood, will be for burning, and fuel for the fire. 6. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.[6] 7. Of the greatness of His rule and of its prosperity there is no end, on the throne of David and over his empire, to establish and to uphold it, by justice and righteousness, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah Sabaoth 'will perform this.'"

Thus alternately denouncing the sins of his own people, predicting their impending judgment by God; encouraging

[1] Delitzsch understands Jehovah; Hitzig, the idol gods. [2] Isa. ix. 1-7.

[3] Pul carried off the Israelites from these regions, B.C. 734. See p. 269.

[4] In Neil's *Pal. Explored*, p. 106, a harvest home is described.

[5] Delitzsch has "for the war shoes (boots) of the soldier rushing to the noise of battle," etc. I prefer the translation of Gesenius, Knobel, and Hitzig, which is given.

[6] Delitzsch sees in this great prophecy of the Messiah, our Lord, the child Immanuel of chap. vii. Even Hitzig translates the words "Mighty God" as we do, "starker Gott."

them to reliance on Him as their surest dependence even politically: foretelling the defeat of their enemies, and the final glory of the remnant who should survive the impending national calamities, Isaiah must have been a great power in the State. But his majestic eloquence and the Divine authority with which he spoke had no influence on Ahaz and his court. An alliance with the king of Assyria was concluded in B.C. 734,[1] and a gift, far greater than the country could afford, was gathered together and sent him, to secure his active help. The silver and gold in the temple treasury, and even the sacred vessels and all the money in the royal exchequer, hardly sufficed.[2] Meanwhile, Isaiah was unceasing in his activity. Day by day, apparently, he sought to influence Jerusalem for good; warning or cheering the citizens by Divine promises, if, only, they returned heartily to Jehovah. The approaching ruin of Israel for its wickedness and its hostility to Judah could not in such a time be overlooked. A fragment of one address on this great topic is still extant.

"IX. 8. Jehovah,"[3] says the prophet, "has sent a word to Jacob; it has descended on Israel, 9. and the whole people—Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—will soon know its power, who say in their arrogance and pride, 10. 'Our houses, of sun-dried bricks, have fallen down, but we shall build with squared stones; the (common) sycamore trees have been hewn down, we shall use cedar[4] in their stead.' 11. But Jehovah has raised up the princes[5] of Rezin[6] against them, and stirred up other enemies. 12. Syria on the east, Philistia on the west, devour Israel with open mouth. But yet God's anger is not turned away from him, but His hand is stretched out still!

[1] Schrader, p. 258. [2] 2 Kings xvi. 7, 8. 2 Chron. xxviii. 21. [3] Isa. ix. 8-x. 4.

[4] Bought at a great price from the Phœnicians who held the cedar forests of Lebanon. [5] Literally, "oppressors."

[6] Delitzsch refers this to the Assyrians. Knobel renders it "the vassal princes of Rezin." No attack of Philistia on Israel is recorded, but both Syria and Philistia, as Assyrian tributaries, would be required to send auxiliaries to the army of the Great King.

"13. But the people do not turn to Him that smites them, nor do they seek Jehovah of Hosts. 14. Therefore Jehovah will cut off from Israel, head and tail, the palm-branch and the rush, in one day. 15. The elder and the dignitary, he is the head, and the (false) prophet who teaches lies, he is the tail.[1] 16. The leaders of this people have become false guides, and those they guide are led to misfortune and ruin. 17. Therefore the Lord has not spared[2] their youth, and has not pitied their orphans and widows, for they are all evil and reprobate, and every mouth speaks ungodliness. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!

"18. For wickedness flames up like fire (in outbursts of civil war and anarchy);[3] it burns up the (worthless) thorns and thistles, and catches in the thickets of the forest, spreading wider and wider, and rises in whirling smoke. 19. Through the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts the land is burnt up, and the people become fuel for the fire: no man spares his brother. 20. He snatches up what he can on the right hand and (still) is hungry; and eats on the left and has not enough: he will even eat the flesh of his own arm (in his starving madness).[4] Manasseh (shall fight against) Ephraim; Ephraim (against) Manasseh; the two together against Judah. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!

"X. 1. Woe to them that draw up unjust decisions; who write out oppressive ordinances (on the public tablets[5]), 2. to keep the poor from getting justice; to rob the poor of My people of their (legal) rights, that they may prey on the widow and spoil the orphan! 3. What will ye do in the day of visitation and in the (storm of) ruin that comes from afar? To whom will ye flee for help? And where will you store your wealth (to keep it safe)? 4. Nothing will be left but to crouch among the captives, or lie dead among the slain. On account of all this, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still!"[6]

[1] These words are omitted, as an interpolation, by Gesenius, Cheyne, Hitzig, Diestel, Ewald, Knobel, and Kneucker. Naegelsbach and others defend them as pointing, with "the elders and dignitaries," to the second class of leaders in Israel.

[2] Knobel. Lagarde.

[3] After Pekah's death; from 739 to 731. Hitzig.

[4] A picture of general misery, or perhaps of intestine feuds in which the people destroy each other to the uttermost. The tribes, loosened from their union by repeated revolutions, reverted more and more to their old isolation and opposition after the violent accession of Pekah.

[5] Perhaps alluding to their being written on tablets, as a kind of publication. So Knobel and Diestel. In this case, a curious light is thrown on the culture of the northern kingdom.

[6] Isa. ix. 8–x. 4.

But if Israel were thus sternly denounced before the listening multitudes of Jerusalem, their other foes from Damascus, now wasting the land, were not spared. Against them all the great prophet lifted up his voice in a special "burden."[1]

"XVII. 1. Damascus, said he,[2] shall perish from the number of cities, and become a tumbled heap of ruins![3] 2. The towns of Aroer[4]—the East Jordan country—shall be forsaken. They shall be feeding places for flocks which shall lie down in them; no man remaining to make them afraid. 3. The fortress[5] will be destroyed from Ephraim and the kingdom from Damascus, and it will be with the remnant of Syria as with the (doomed) glory of the children of Israel, says Jehovah Sabaoth. 4. For it will come to pass in that day that the glory of Jacob will be humbled and the fatness of his flesh become lean.[6] 5. And it will be (with him) as when the reaper gathers the stalks of the corn and his arm cuts off the ears; or like one who gathereth the (thick growing) ears in the (rich) Valley of the Giants (close by Jerusalem.)[7] 6. Yet a gleaning will be left, as at the shaking down of the olive berries:[8] two or three berries on the uppermost bough; four or five in the branches, says Jehovah, the God of Israel.

"7. In that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes will be lifted to the Holy One of Israel. 8. And He will not look to the altars —the work of his hands; nor will he have respect to the Asherah[9] or Baal images which his own fingers have made. 9. In that day will the fortified cities (of Ephraim) be like the ruins (of the old Canaanite towns) in the depths of the woods, or on the tops of the hills; ruins of

[1] Literally, *lifting up*. Prov. xxx. 1 = *prophecy*.

[2] Isa. xvii. 1-11.

[3] This does not preclude its being gradually rebuilt, as indeed it was. The chapter must have been written before 732, the year when Damascus fell. *K. A. T.*, 264.

[4] There was one Aroer in Reuben, on the Arnon; another, in Gad, near Rabbath Ammon. Aroer means "the naked," "the laid bare."

[5] Samaria.

[6] Many will be killed or carried off by the enemy, and the remnant reduced to misery in the desolated land.

[7] It is very fruitful.

[8] Gathered by beating the branches. They are harvested while still unripe, as the oil thus got from them is finer.

[9] Asherah = goddess of fertility. So called by the Hebrew women, in the belief that she secured their having children. Diestel, p. 148. The words "Baal images" are literally "Sun-gods." Deut. iv. 19; xvii. 3. Jer. viii. 2. Ewald translates the words, "idol groves and sun-pillars."

towns deserted (at the Conquest), in terror of the advancing hosts of Joshua; and the land shall be waste. 10. For thou (Israel) hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the Rock of thy strength—(thy protecting Rock-fortress, Jehovah)! Therefore didst thou lay out thy soil for the plants thou lovest—(the lewd gardens of thy idols)—and set in it the vines of the alien;[1] 11. on the day of thy planting it, thou madest a hedge round it, and ere long brought thy sowing to flower. (So zealous wast thou after thy idols.) But the harvest will be lost in the day of thy grief and desperate sorrow."[2]

These gloomy prophecies were speedily fulfilled. Rejoiced to receive the homage of the grandson of the great Uzziah who had opposed him so stoutly, and eager to crush Damascus and Israel, now weakened more than ever by their invasion of Judah, Pul[3] hastened to the rescue of Ahaz, with what results we have already seen.

Less than three years before, Isaiah had re-enforced, probably with additions of his own, ancient prophecies respecting Moab—now so terribly fulfilled. As no passage in his writings presents a more vivid picture of the horrors that surrounded Judah, I give it in full.[4]

"XV. 1. In one night," says the prophet, "Ar[5] of Moab is stormed,[6] is ruined; in one night Kir[7] of Moab is stormed and ruined. 2. Bajith[8] and Dibon[9] have gone up to the high places to weep and

[1] Gave thyself up to foreign gods. [2] Ewald.

[3] Pul was the great king's name in Babylon; Tiglath-pileser, in Assyria.

[4] Knobel, Diestel, Cheyne, and most others think this passage, chs. xv. and xvi., an old prophecy perhaps Jonah's referring primarily to the conquests of Moab by Jeroboam II., with two verses added by Isaiah (xvi. 13, 14). Knobel fancies it refers to Pul's invasion; Cheyne leaves the question open. But no period suits better than that of Pul. Delitzsch refers it to this, and does not hint at its possibly earlier origin. Knobel's objection, that the invasion is said to have come from the north, may be removed by supposing it to have been made by a corps sent south from Damascus by Pul.

[5] Ar lay on the north border of Moab, on the Arnon. [6] Isa. xv., xvi.

[7] Kir—now Kerak—was on the south border, nine miles south of Rabbah.

[8] North or north-west of Dibon.

[9] The present Diban, where the Moabite stone was found. It lies in a low plain, less than three miles north of the central part of the Arnon.

supplicate the gods. Moab wails at Nebo [1] and Medeba.[2] All heads are shaved (in token of mourning); all beards cut off. 3. In the streets they wrap themselves in sackcloth; on the house-tops, and in their broad places they howl, weeping, abundantly! 4. Heshbon[3] and Elealeh[3] cry out; their lamentation is heard even at Jahaz;[3] the warriors of Moab break out in wailing; their souls tremble within them!

"5. My heart cries aloud for Moab. Her fugitives flee (far south), even to Zoar[4] and the third Eglath;[5] they go weeping up the ascent of Luhith;[6] on the way to Horonaim[7] they raise a wild cry at the destruction that has broken over them! 6. For the (flowing) springs of Nimrim[8] are stopped up; the herbage round them is withered; the grass is gone; every green thing has perished! 7. The sons of Moab flee (from the wasted lands) with their goods and all that they prize (to the far south), to the Spring of the Wilderness.[9] 8. For wailing has spread round all the borders of Moab; its lamentation has reached to Eglaim [10] (on the south), and the Terebinth Springs [11] (in the north). 9. The waters of Dimon [12] are full of blood (shed by the foe). But I will bring on it fresh sorrows; for I will set over the remnant left of Moab and the rest of the land (a ruler who shall be strong and fierce as) a lion.[13]

"XVI. 1. Send ye your tribute lambs (once more) to your ancient lord,[14] the king of Judah, that ye may have his protection (ye fugitives of Moab who have escaped to Edom—send them), from Petra (to which ye have fled—through the wilderness of the south), to the mount of the daughter of Zion—(Jerusalem)! 2. (Thus the chiefs of

[1] The present Naban, nine miles south of Heshbon.

[2] In the same plain as Dibon.

[3] Heshbon is on the Mishor, or upland pastures of Moab, north of Medeba. Elealeh is about two miles north-west of it. Heshbon is 3,000 feet above the sea. Jazer, or Jahsa, is put, by Kiepert, fifteen miles south of Heshbon.

[4] South-east of the Dead Sea.

[5] It is not uncommon in the East to distinguish places of the same name by a number.

[6] On the way to Zoar.

[7] A place known for its "two caves" (Horonaim), beyond Luhith.

[8] Near the south border of Moab.

[9] The Wady el Ahsa, between Moab and Edom, reaching to the Dead Sea.

[10] At the south end of the Dead Sea. It means "the two ponds."

[11] Bertheau. Num. xxi. 16, the Springs of the Heroes, or Princes.

[12] Not known.

[13] Delitzsch thinks this was a king of Judah. But no king of Judah ruled Moab after Pul's time. Knobel and Diestel fancy it points to an unknown ruler. But see next verse.

[14] 2 Kings iii. 4.

Moab advise their brethren.) Then shall the daughters of Moab [1] who have fled like homeless birds, like nestlings scared from their nest, to the gorge of the Arnon [2] (hasten to Jerusalem, and there say)— 3. 'Take counsel (and help us), make a decision (in our favour), give us protection, that its shadow, even in the glaring noon, may be like that of night (which securely conceals and guards); hide those driven out from their country; do not give up those wandering homeless! 4. Let the outcasts of Moab dwell with thee. Be thou a covert to them from the spoiler. For henceforth Moab will no longer be an oppressor; violence is past; the treaders-down are gone out of the land —(from this time friendly relations will reign with Jerusalem). 5. Through such mercy shall the throne be established. And there shall sit in the tabernacle of David a judge, both seeking right and skilled in judgment.'" [3]

But the people of Judah distrust these professions and treat them as only the language of passing despair. Moab assumes that the stern rule of Judah, which roused it to rebellion in former days, is gone, and that the reigning king will make his dominion over them permanent by his gentle uprightness. But this attempt to blame Judah for the past and to excuse their own unfaithfulness does not deceive. The ruler of Jerusalem answers them sternly. Their words have been heard, but if Moab be still so little humbled or ready to own its past guilt, no help can be granted. Even the prophet, much as it pains him, feels it must be so.[4]

[1] Its village or town populations.

[2] The chief stream of Moab. See vol. II. p. 397.

[3] Knobel and Diestel. Delitzsch thinks the prophet anticipates that after the enemy had gone from Moab, Judah will take it under her protection and reign with brotherly love over it. Knobel supposes that the embassy to Jerusalem asks leave to live in Edom—Judah having then the power there—and that the request is granted and promises of favour made. Cheyne fancies the king of Judah is the Messiah, and that the peace and love will come under His reign. This also is the view of Delitzsch.

[4] This is the best explanation I can give of a passage which every version translates differently.

The answer is, therefore, returned.

"XVI. 6. 'We have heard of the pride of Moab, of haughty Moab; of his arrogance, his insolence, his airs, his false and idle boastings (and we distrust you. We reject your entreaty.)'

"7. Then shall Moab wail for Moab—the whole land shall wail; for the raisin-cakes[1] of Kir-hareseth shall ye mourn, utterly broken-hearted! 8. For the vineyards of Heshbon are withered; the lords of the nations have broken down the chosen plants of the vine of Sibmah,[2] whose branches reach (north) to Jazer; (eastwards) to the wilderness: (west and south) to the Dead Sea. 9. Therefore I will mingle my tears with the weeping of Jazer[3] for the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon and Elealeh, for upon thy fruit harvest and vintage the wild cry of the enemy has fallen! 10. Gladness is taken away, and joy from the garden-land, and in the vineyards there is no singing, or shouting; no treaders tread grapes in thy wine-presses; their cry of rejoicing have I made to cease. 11. For all this, my heart sounds like a lute for Moab; my bosom for Kir-haresh.[4] 12. Nor shall any supplication of Moab to its idol gods be of avail. It shall come to pass, when Moab appears, in vain, on her high places, and wearies herself there, and then betakes herself to her idol-temple to pray, she shall not prevail. Then shall Moab be ashamed of Chemosh and turn to Jehovah.[5]

"13. This is the word that Jehovah has spoken concerning Moab of old. 14. But now Jehovah has spoken, saying, in three years, strictly, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be dishonoured, with all its great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble."

[1] Hos. iii. 1. Kerak is still very rich in its grapes.

[2] Close to Heshbon. Sibmah was the centre of the vine-growing districts of Moab.

[3] A Gadite town, 15 miles north from Heshbon. Kiepert. The Wady Sar (formerly Jazer) still produces immense quantities of grapes and raisins.

[4] Kir-haresh or Kir-haraseth is the same as Kir—now, Kerak. Kir Moab means the Hill or Fortress of Moab. The other means the "fortress of burnt brick," or in Palmer's opinion, "Hilltown." *Desert of Exodus*, p. 367. Furrer's description of Kir deserves quotation. "Lofty heights dominate Kir almost all round, though it is, itself, fully 3,000 feet above the sea. From the ruins of the castle there is a glorious view westward, over the Dead Sea, whose blue waters spread themselves picturesquely in their deep yellow basin of rocks. The highlands of Judah, rising behind in great terraces, form the background to the landscape. Mount Olivet and the hills round Bethlehem are clearly seen. Great streams foam down the gorges north and south of the town, till the beginning of summer. Olives, figs, and orange trees flourish on artificial terraces on the steep slopes." *Bib. Lex.*, vol. iii. p. 534.

[5] These words are restored here from Jer. xlviii. 13, by Ewald and Cheyne.

A short fragment of Isaiah, from the "year in which King Ahaz died,"[1] brings back the vividness with which men felt the great incidents of Pul's recent invasion. The Philistines had been beaten to the ground by the great conqueror, but they retained, under Assyrian vassalage, a number of the towns of Judah with their petty districts. They might hope that the weakness of the reign of Ahaz would be perpetuated in that of his successor, but Isaiah heralds the advent of the new sovereign by a prediction of his glory.

"XIV. 29. Rejoice not, ye districts that make up Philistia,[2] that the rod which has smitten you is broken.[3] For out of the root of the serpent there shall come forth a basilisk;[4] its fruit shall be terrible as a flying dragon. 30. The poorest of the poor in Judah shall eat his food (in peace), and the needy shall lie down secure, but I will kill thy root with famine and the survivors will perish by the sword of the basilisk king. 31. Howl! O gate; cry aloud, O city; melt with fear, O whole Philistia; for out of the north cometh a smoke—(the dust clouds of an advancing army and the destroying fires which it spreads on its march), and there are no stragglers in the host. (But Jerusalem shall be safe.) When the envoys of the Great King of Assyria—the King of Nations—shall come to her, they will be told that 'Jehovah has founded Zion, and that in her the afflicted (fugitives) of His people can find refuge.'"

[1] If the inscription be genuine. But this is questioned. Knobel. Diestel. Ewald.

[2] Isaiah xiv. 28-32. The Septuagint has "all ye alien races."

[3] (?) That Judah is now weak.

[4] (?) Hezekiah. Or the references may be to Pul's death, and to Sargon, his redoubtable successor. The "basilisk"—"royal" serpent, or "king of serpents"—"a small, very poisonous reptile, about a span long, almost peculiar to Africa." Mühlau und Volck. The Hebrew name "Tsepha" implies its making a hissing sound. Gesenius calls it a viper. Tristram says it may possibly be the great yellow viper, which is active by night. *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 275. It is large enough to swallow a leveret, and is found in Palestine.

CHAPTER XIII.

HEZEKIAH.

	Auth. Version.	Riehm.	Schenkel.
Hezekiah, ...	B.C. 727–698	714–686	716–687

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.		KINGS OF EGYPT.	
Shalmaneser IV. .	B.C. 727–722	Sabako (So). . .	B.C. 727–719
Sargon, ...	722–705	Sabatoka, . . .	719–705
Sennacherib, . .	705–681	Tirhakah, . . .	705–687

The condition of Judah when Hezekiah, the "Strength of Jehovah," ascended the throne, at the age of twenty,[1] on the death of his father, was sad in the extreme. The political situation was humiliating. The ruinous tribute paid to Assyria by Ahaz was expected to be continued. The court party were in favour of its being so, as at once a protection to the State, and a bond of union with the Great King, whose slaves or pensioners they were in heart. Pride and oppression had developed themselves in a habitual disregard of justice, and a lawless violence towards the weak. The numerous members of the royal family and the nobility monopolized the administration of justice, and encroached even on the power of the king. The common citizen, the

[1] In 2 Kings xviii. 2, Hezekiah is said to have been twenty-five years old when he began to reign, but this seems a textual corruption for twenty, else Ahaz would have been only eleven when a father. He died at the age of thirty-six, and twenty-five from this leave eleven.

peasant, and the shepherd trembled before them. The priests had caught the contagion of corruption, and even among the prophets a large proportion abused their office to the most selfish and dishonourable ends.[1] Indifferent as to the result, they gave forth mock revelations to the people, as their patrons directed, and too often led the masses astray. The true prophets, faithful to their duty, were branded as public enemies, while their rivals were held up as patriots. Public feeling was thus roused against the fearless and upright among the order, till a persecution, like that of Jezebel's days, seemed imminent, and the servants of God had to hide for their lives.[2] Still more; while the body of the people was thus impoverished; the rich, selfish and oppressive; the judges corrupt, and heathen superstition invading all ranks; the State was torn by rival factions. One party urged a treaty with Egypt; another the continuance of the Assyrian tribute, and a third stood up for national independence. Hezekiah had no light task before him to guide public affairs.

Yet he was not without a strong moral support from the better class of the population. The reformation of Jehoiada and Zechariah, followed as it was by the appearance of the new school of prophets, had aroused a deep and earnest religiousness in the hearts of not a few. The words of Joel, Amos, and Hosea, had been pondered; the teachings of the ancient oracles more fervently studied, and a religious feeling excited, destined to yield the richest spiritual fruits. Amidst these influences Isaiah had risen, the prince of the prophets—and, to extend them, by instructing a body of disciples, was one of the great objects of his life. It was no longer necessary to form separate communities, to keep those

[1] Isa. ix. 13-15. Mic. iii. 11; iv. 5. [2] Isa. xxix. 21. Hos. ix. 8. Isa. xxx. 20.

who were being trained for the prophetic office apart from the general population. They could now live in their own homes, under the protection of the temple, and gather round their master in its courts. They no longer claimed to anoint successors to kings, or to be the prime movers in violent political revolutions. Instead of the stormy zeal of their predecessors they sought to develop the humbler virtues of gentleness, patience, and lowly devotion to God. Men knew them as the "meek of the earth," and "the poor,"[1] who strove rather to bear injustice and suffering, with lowly trust in God, than to vindicate their personal wrongs. To such a body the best men of the nation looked as the hope of its nobler spiritual future. The thought of them cheered Isaiah in his deepest sorrow at the guilt and wickedness of his countrymen, and the judgments impending in consequence. "I hope in Jehovah," says he; "though He has hidden His face from the House of Jacob, yet will I hope in Him. Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me are for signs and (good) portents in Israel."[2] "When the House of Jacob see that the disciples in their midst honour the Holy God, they also will sanctify and honour Him."[3]

The personal character and endowments of Hezekiah were illustrious. Ready for war when necessary, and alike brave and skilful in its conduct, he was more inclined to the gentle arts of peace. Though he could wrest cities from the Philistines and defend Jerusalem with resolution and ability, he gave his heart rather to the promotion of the internal welfare of his kingdom. Fond of agriculture and pastoral pursuits, like his great-grandfather Uzziah, he had herds and flocks in the Negeb and elsewhere,[4] and built shepherds'

[1] Isa. xi. 4; xxix. 19.
[2] Isa. viii. 17, 18. Graetz.
[3] Isa. xxix. 23. Graetz.
[4] 2 Chron. xxxii. 28, 29.

towers and large folds for their protection. Vineyards, oliveyards, and cornfields were his delight. His tender religious sensibility, and poetic genius—the first instance of the latter since David—are seen in the hymn which he composed after his recovery from almost mortal sickness.[1] His love of culture displayed itself in his zeal for the preservation of the religious writings of his nation, of which their literature to a great extent consisted. Descended, apparently on his mother's side,[2] from Zechariah, the favourite prophet of Uzziah, he inherited a lofty enthusiasm for the ancient faith. In direct contrast to his father, who had zealously favoured everything Assyrian, Hezekiah gave himself passionately to whatever was national, and devoted his life to the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from the heathenism which Ahaz had introduced. The "Law" was his guiding star in public and private. The prophets were his honoured and cherished counsellors. As intelligent and refined as he was humble and godly, he, first, took measures to collect and arrange the Sacred Books. A Royal Commission appointed by him gathered from the lips of the people of both Israel and Judah[3] the materials which now form the Book of Proverbs, or transcribed them from ancient manuscripts. Jewish tradition ascribes to him, further, the collecting of the Prophecies of Isaiah and the preservation of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.[4] Nor was his reign unmarked by a brilliant literature of its own, for, besides the writings of contemporary prophets, various Psalms of this period still survive in the Canon, and speak of an intellectual activity which must have shewn itself in every direction. Ahaz had closed the gates of the temple; Heze-

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 9-20.
[2] 2 Kings xviii. 2.
[3] Prov. xxv. 1.
[4] Gesenius, *Iesaia*, vol. i. p. 16.

kiah not only reopened them, but put the whole building in thorough repair, and revived the use of the Psalms of David and Asaph in public worship,[1] so that the multitude once more heard them sung to the rich chants and music which had delighted their forefathers, but had been long disused.[2] The literary influence of the study and exposition of what had been known since the days of Solomon as Wisdom shewed itself strongly in Hezekiah's age, even outside the limits of Israel, as the dates of many Psalms and Proverbs strikingly shew. But it found, apparently, in this flowering time of the best Hebrew literature, a special triumph in the Book of Job: a composition strangely outside the usual limits of Hebrew thought and customs. The introduction of lessons from animate and inanimate nature; the identification of Wisdom with the fear of God; the great problem discussed—the reconciliation of the Divine goodness and justice with the distribution of evil and prosperity among men, link it closely to the Book of Ecclesiastes and to some of the Psalms. These, also, are part of the "Wisdom" literature, but it extended beyond them to a later period. Long after, an Alexandrian Jew wrote "The Wisdom of Solomon;" and "Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus, the son of Sirach," was a continuation of the same class of composition, dating from the second century before Christ. It will be seen also, hereafter, how the personification of wisdom gradually lent itself to Messianic ideas after the close of the Canon, and paved the way for conceptions adopted in the New Testament itself. But in the case of Job there is the unique peculiarity of its being written outside the limits of Israel, for it had its birth not on the west of the Jordan, but in the great pasture and corn region stretching south

[1] 2 Chron. xxix. 30. [2] 2 Chron. xxix. 27.

from Damascus. Here tradition has placed "The Land of Job," and the people still speak of it by that name, assigning his home to the most fruitful part in the Hauran plains. Here there is still a hamlet known as "Job's place," and springs in which, according to the Koran, Job bathed after his recovery. Fifteen hundred years ago we find this locality noted by Eusebius as the country of the patriarch, and Chrysostom speaks of the people making pilgrimages to it from all parts of the world, to see the ash heaps on which Job sat, and to kiss the ground made sacred by his memory. Nor is there any difficulty in the fact that his home is at times spoken of as in Arabia, for that name was used of the Hauran, its southern town, Bozra, being reckoned in Arabia by Josephus, who even assigns the Hauran as the country of Uz, the reputed founder of Damascus and Trachonitis.

Nor is it to be thought strange that so highly developed a literature should thus early have flourished in Palestine, for we have already seen compositions of various kinds, noticed in Scripture, even before the days of Solomon, and the Moabite Stone remains to our own day, a witness of the advance in literary expression, even across the Jordan. There had been, in fact, from very early ages, great activity in literature in these parts; we have, in the tablets recovered at Tel el-Amarna, ocular proof that, at least as regards epistolary correspondence, even the fifteenth century before Christ, from which these tablets date, was as busy with it as any later age could well be. The strangest thing is that not only was active literary intercourse going on between all parts of the civilized Eastern world, but that the language of Babylonia and the complicated Babylonian system of writing were the common medium through which it was conducted. The Babylonian or Assyrian language, in fact,

was as much the *lingua Franca* of diplomacy and education as French is in these modern days, with the difference that, whereas it is comparatively easy to learn how to write French, the acquisition of the cumbrous cuneiform syllabary, with its multitudinous characters and their multitudinous values, required a large expenditure of time and labour. It is evident, therefore, that throughout the west of Asia there must have been schools in which it was taught and learned, as well as libraries in which its records were kept. A vivid light is thus cast on the name of the Canaanitish city Kirjath-Sepher or "Book-town."[1] It must have been one of the centres of learning and education, and in its "debir" or sanctuary would have been stored a library of clay books like the libraries that existed in the temples of Babylonia and Assyria. The library is still waiting, it may be, for the spade of the explorer to disinter it. If so, it is not easy even to imagine the revelations it has to make to us, buried as it has been under the friendly shelter of the soil since the days when the city of Kirjath-Sepher was destroyed by Othniel the Kenazzite. It is not improbable that the list of Edomite kings given in Gen. xxxvi. was derived from the cuneiform tablets of some similar library; at all events the discovery of the tablets of Tel el-Amarna shews that writing was known and practised in Palestine before the days of the Exodus or the introduction of the Phœnician alphabet, and that therefore the earlier records of the Old Testament need not have been so dependent on tradition as is ordinarily supposed.

To secure the maintenance of the priests and Levites Hezekiah restored the payment of the tithes fixed by the Law of Moses, including "the first fruits of corn, wine, oil, and

[1] Judg. i. 11.

date syrup, and of all the increase of the field."[1] Without oppressing the people, his wise and upright rule kept his treasury always full, and his palace boasted of stores of spices and costly oil, and a well-appointed armoury.[2] Jewish tradition, magnifying his fame and merits in after years, fancied that he must have been the promised Messiah; and the inspired compiler of the Second Book of Kings only reflects the universal homage of contemporary public opinion in the grand eulogium, that "he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him."[3]

As the grandson of a prophet—if the Zechariah who was his grandfather be the prophet so named—Hezekiah appears to have shewn a bias towards the ancient religion from his early youth. The prophet Micah seems, however, to have exerted, at least in one instance, a powerful spiritual influence on him. Contrary to what had become the rule, that seer had retained in many respects the outward characteristics of the ancient school of prophets. Humble and rustic in position compared with Isaiah, we find him wandering through the streets of Jerusalem stripped of his upper garments, and mingling his prophetic appeals and warnings with loud wails, like the deep hollow roar of the ostrich or the piteous howl of the jackal.[4] Such an apparition, proclaiming from day to day the sins of Jerusalem, and threatening, even in the royal presence and before the court, its impending ruin, struck the king with awe,[5] and seems to have been the turning point of his religious life. His

[1] 2 Chron. xxxi. 2, 5. Exod. xxii. 29; xxiii. 16–19. Prov. iii. 9, 10.
[2] 2 Kings xx. 13. [3] 2 Kings xviii. 5.
[4] Mic. i. 8. Kleinert. "The voice of the ostrich is a deep, hollow, rumbling sound, so like the roar of a lion that even practised ears have been deceived by it." Wood's *Nat. Hist.*, vol. iii. p. 648. [5] Jer. xxvi. 18.

attendants, aghast at the intrusion of the prophet and at his daring words, would have had the offender seized and punished, but the king took the wiser course of listening to his appeals.

His first care was the burial of his unworthy father; but even in this he shewed respect for popular feeling; denying the remains a place in the royal sepulchre, though he caused them to be interred within the walls of Jerusalem.[1] This done, at the opening of the ecclesiastical year, some months, it would seem, after his accession, that the sacred building might be made ready for the Passover, which legally fell on the fourteenth of that month, he threw open the gates of the temple, then, it would seem, long closed, and began the repairs of the structure.[2] Assembling the priests and Levites in the open space east of it, he enjoined them to commence its purification at once, and prepare it for the restoration of the public services. The sacred lamps had been long extinguished, no incense had been offered on the golden altar, and the burnt offerings had been offered on the Syrian altar, so that they were regarded with horror, as offered on the altar of idols; but all this must be reversed. The calamities of the nation, he told them, had been the punishment of such neglect; they must now be diligent to repair it. Having first purified their own persons, they zealously carried out the royal command, and in a fortnight had made the building fit for use. The "uncleanness" found in it was carried down to the Kedron and scattered on the stream; the altar of burnt-offering restored to its place, and all the temple vessels and furniture, which Ahaz had removed, made ready for their respective purposes and restored to their places. A sin-offering for the kingdom, the

[1] 2 Chron. xxviii. 27.

[2] 2 Chron. xxix. 3.

temple, and the people, was next offered by the priests, by Hezekiah's order; the choirs and instrumental bands of the Levites standing in their old places and joining in the service; the trumpets sounding, and the singers and musicians filling the air once more with the words and music of the old Psalms, while the king and court united with the congregation in lowly worship. It was a worthy inauguration of a noble reign.

Remains of Tyre.

It may have been about the time of the fall of Samaria in 722, that Isaiah uttered the striking prediction of the destruction of Tyre, which forms the twenty-third chapter of his prophecies. Instead of the friendly alliance of the days of David and Solomon, Phœnicia had turned bitterly against Judah since the revolution of Jehoiada, by which heathenism had been proscribed, and Athaliah murdered—a Tyrian in religion and sympathy, and, by her mother Jezebel, in blood. Its slave marts had been filled

with Jews of both sexes, torn from their homes in Judah by Philistine raiders, and its slave dealers had ruthlessly sold them across the sea to distant heathen countries. The bitterest hatred had thus sprung up against the Tyrians, and found sorrowful expression in the inspired utterances of Isaiah. The great city had already suffered terribly by the five years' siege under Shalmaneser and Sargon, but this was only the first of the successive attacks by which it was ultimately to be overthrown.

The people of Jerusalem must, however, have been filled with wonder, when in one of his public addresses, the crowd around heard him predict in burning words the fall of the great merchant city :

"XXIII. 1. Howl, ye Tarshish-ships,"[1] cried he, "for Tyre is laid waste! The people of Cyprus will tell you, as you call (homeward bound), (at their island), that 'there is no house in Tyre left standing; no home left to welcome you back!'

"2. Be dumb (for terror), ye of the island (on which Tyre stands,) whose streets the merchants of Sidon throng, 3. who have brought over the sea the corn of Egypt, the harvest of the Nile valley,[2] till you became the mart of nations!

"4. Blush for shame, O Sidon; for (Tyre, the city of) the sea—the sea-fortress—speaks, saying '(My site is desolate;) I have not travailed or brought forth children; or nourished young men; or brought up maidens; (I am laid waste)!' 5. When the news of the destruction of Tyre reaches Egypt that land will tremble for fear and sorrow!

"6. Flee away, ye people of Tyre, to (your distant colony) Tarshish;[3] wail aloud, ye inhabitants of the (Phœnician) coast! 7. 'Is this, then, your (once) joyous city' (men will say), 'whose rise is from the distant past, but whose feet must now bear her off to foreign lands?'

"8. Who has devised this against Tyre, the dispenser of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the nobles of the earth? 9. Jehovah of Hosts has done it; to bring down the pride of all her glory, and to humble the nobles of the earth.

[1] Isa. xxiii. 1, ff. [2] Sihor = the Nile; an Egyptian word = "the turbid."
[3] The district near Cadiz, in Spain.

"10. Thou, Tarshish, daughter of Tyre (art free now: thy mother-city is no more able to oppress thee! Thou) mayest spread thyself over thy territory, free as the Nile (over Egypt). There is no longer a hindrance![1]

"11. Jehovah has stretched out His hand over the sea and shaken the kingdoms (with fear), by His command against the great merchant city, that its fortresses be destroyed. 12. He has said also, 'Thou shalt no more rejoice, thou dishonoured virgin-daughter of Sidon.'[2] Arise, flee away to Cyprus. But even there thou shalt have no rest.'[3]

"13. Behold the land of the Chaldæans. Its people till of late were unknown. Assyria has now made it a wilderness for savage beasts. The Chaldæans built high their towers; they raised their palaces, but the Assyrian has made the whole land a heap of ruins. (Yet they are to be the destroyers of Tyre)![4]

"14. Howl, ye Tarshish-ships, for your stronghold is laid waste. 15. And when it is so, it shall come to pass that Tyre shall be forgotten for many years, as if lying under the ban of a king who reigned seventy years, and whose decree cannot be changed while he lives.[5]

[1] Naegelsbach supposes the words in the text—literally, the "girdle is gone," refer to a toll or dues on passing some barrier; but this seems weak. The treatment of the Tyrian colonies by the mother-city was proverbially harsh, but, now she had fallen, this girdle to their development was gone. Mommsen has a vivid picture of the blind tyranny and narrowness of the policy followed in Carthage, the greatest of Phœnician colonies. *Geschichte Roms*, vol. ii. p. 507.

[2] Tyre was an offshoot from Sidon. Hitherto it had been virgin in the sense of unconquered.

[3] The inscription of Sargon states that he crossed the sea of the Setting Sun, and in the third year conquered a land that could hardly be any other than Cyprus. *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, ii. 49.

[4] This passage has given rise to many very different translations. For well-nigh a century after Isaiah, the Chaldæans were subject to Nineveh, which had crushed them after continual wars through many generations. Babylon, as a Chaldæan kingdom, became a world-power only under Nebuchadnezzar, who reigned from B.C. 604 to 560. The Hebrew text of this passage seems therefore a clear instance of prediction, impossible to mere human foresight. Diestel's edition of Knobel, translates it: "Behold the land of the Kasdim (Chaldæans); this people has as yet been nothing. Ashur has made them a steppe people (carrying them off from their hills to the Babylonian plains), they raise their war tower (as part of the Assyrian force besieging Tyre); they lay in ruins the palaces (of Tyre); they make it a heap of wreck." On the other hand, Ewald and Schrader think the word "Chaldæans" ought to be Canaanites, and translate the verse thus:

"Behold the land of the Canaanites (that is, Phœnicia), this people is no more. Ashur has made it a desolation. They, the Phœnicians, raised the towers, (that is), their garden-houses, built their palaces; the Assyrian has turned all to ruins."

[5] Esth. viii. 8. The expression seventy years seems to be a conventional one for

Yet at the end of this long time, it shall be with Tyre as the song of the harlot has it: 16. 'Take the harp, go round the city, thou forgotten harlot. Play skilfully, sing many songs, that thou mayst again be remembered.' 17. For it shall come to pass at the end of a long time, that Jehovah will visit Tyre with prosperity once more, so that she shall get her harlot hire again, and begin afresh her uncleanness with all the kingdoms of the earth.[1]

"18. But her gain and her hire shall be holy to Jehovah (for she shall in the end be converted to Him). Nor will it then be heaped up or hoarded (for herself, or for her idols, as hitherto); it will flow forth to (satisfy the wants of) God's people, who dwell before Jehovah at Jerusalem. (To them shall come her gains;) that they may have food in plenty and raiment of beauty."

Tyre was founded about 2,750 years before Christ, according to the statements of its priests to Herodotus. It is spoken of in the Book of Joshua as "the strong city."[2] It seems first to have suffered from the spread of the Assyrian empire, in B.C. 869; payment of tribute by it to King Assur-nazir-pal being then recorded. In 840 we find it buying off Shalmaneser II. by payment of large sums, and again in 742, a century later, ransoming itself in the same way from the armies of Tiglath-pileser II. or Pul. A little later it revolted from that monarch, and had to pay a fine of 150 talents of gold, weighing about three tons, and worth perhaps twenty times as much as at present. Its first siege, so far as we know, was that of Shalmaneser IV. and Sargon. The city on the mainland was destroyed, but that on the island of Tyre held out for five years. This siege ended about 720, and was followed by great prosperity for a hundred and fifty years.[3] It was next besieged by Nebuchadnezzar for thirteen years, from B.C. 585 to 572,

a long period. See Speaker's Commentary on Ezek. xxix. 13. After the final overthrow of Tyre it lay for a long time forsaken and desolate.

[1] Perhaps her corrupting influence on heathen nations is intended. It also, however, evidently refers to her trading relations.

[2] xix. 29.

[3] See Ezek. xxvii.

but he seems to have failed in taking it, though it was forced to become tributary to him and to the Persian kings after him. In B.C. 332, the island city was attacked by Alexander, and for the time crushed. Using the ruins of old Tyre on the mainland to build a mole by which his soldiers could reach the island, he took the still virgin fortress in seven months, and sold 30,000 of the inhabitants as slaves. Still it was not destroyed. Regaining its commercial glory after a while, it continued even in the days of St. Jerome, in the fourth century after Christ, to be "one of the noblest and most beautiful of cities."[1] Its conversion to Christianity, in the general sense always implied in speaking of great communities, was then already an accomplished fact. St. Paul, indeed, had found a Christian church in it.[2] In the beginning of the fourth century Methodius was its bishop, and in 315 a great church was built in it by Eusebius of Cæsarea. In 335, a famous synod was held within its walls. Under the Crusaders it had an archbishop, and was still spoken of as a "most noble city."[3] In 1291, however, it was retaken by the Saracens, and from that time it has sunk into utter decay. Even its ruins have been in great part removed. Last century, when Hasselquist visited it, he found it had only ten inhabitants. The ruins now seen on the peninsula of Tyre are those of the buildings of Crusaders or Saracens. Tyre of the Phœnicians, if any of it still remains, lies below the wreck of the city of the Crusaders, and of those of Mohammedan and early Christian Tyre. So exactly, after long centuries, has the word of prophecy been fulfilled. The now existing Tyre, however, is still a fair sized town, a few of its houses being modern, with tiled

[1] Jer., *In Ezek.* xxviii.
[2] Acts xxi. 3–4.
[3] Joh. Wirziburgensis, *c.* A.D. 1125.

roofs, while the population is about 5,000. It was rebuilt from its ruins last century, by a fanatical Moslem sect—the Metawile. Ancient Tyre stood on reefs or islands forming, together, an area of about 200 acres, with two harbours, each of about twelve acres, or half as large as the harbour of Sidon.

A short respite from the presence of the Assyrian armies in Palestine followed the destruction of Samaria; the garrisons and scattered posts only, remaining. Babylonia, as the cradle of the Assyrian race and its religion—the motherland from which Asshur had gone forth in prehistoric times, to found the cities of Assyria, was an almost sacred country to the Assyrian people. Round Babylon there gathered a veneration like that of Mediæval Europe for Rome; to be king of it was to be supreme lord, by the favour of the great god Bel, over all the lands on the Tigris and Euphrates. Without this honour, even the Sultan of Nineveh was in a measure, at least in public feeling, a subordinate dignitary. Through successive generations, therefore, Assyria had fought with Babylon, to make it her own, that her monarchs might be undisputed head of the great traditions of the past, just as Charlemagne found his highest ambition in linking himself nominally with Rome, as head of the so-called "Holy Roman Empire." Twelve hundred years before Christ an Assyrian king was eager above all things to be able to say that he had been crowned in Babylon, had invaded and conquered it, and successive invasions and temporary conquests had followed continually since that remote day. Tiglath-pileser, a year or two before his death, had subdued it and had "taken the hand of Bel"—the form by which it was made known to the world that the chief god of Babylon had adopted him as the

sovereign. He had called himself Pul, at Babylon, his Assyrian title being that of a king hateful to the great city as one of its former conquerors. Sargon had assumed the name of an ancient Babylonian king, as if in order to shew that he claimed the Babylonian sovereignty. But for a time he could do nothing to realize his pretensions, and was detained in Babylonia and the north, by various wars, so that it was not till B.C. 710—twelve years after the fall of Samaria—that he was once more free to turn his armies against Palestine. Hezekiah could thus for the moment breathe freely, and used the calm to promote the restoration of the worship of Jehovah and the purification of the land from idolatry. The time-honoured use of the tops of hills as local sanctuaries had become greatly corrupted, nor was there any longer the same need of it, since the erection of the temple at Jerusalem. Hence, though even Abraham and Jacob, the great forefathers of the race, had built altars on the hills, and though it might be difficult for those at a distance to come up to the capital, Hezekiah determined to remove all the high places,[1] and thus carry out the ancient

[1] The cairns found on heights, and even in the Jordan valley, may have been Canaanite high places, though possibly they may have been raised over the graves of distinguished men. In not a few places, moreover—for example, on one of the summits of Mount Nebo—there is a cromlech, of two huge stones supporting a third, like the top of an altar, and these may have been "high places." The one on Nebo, indeed, may possibly be one of the seven altars built by Balak for Balaam. There are, besides, numerous circles of huge stones more or less perfect—one especially well preserved, at Diban, in Moab—and these also may be examples of "high places." The analogy of Mohammedan custom certainly gives the idea support. Their sacred places are circles built up for about two feet with stones a foot long. Each circle is provided with a doorway or small cromlech on the west, formed by two stones—generally well hewn and taken from a neighbouring ruin—supporting a third stone or lintel. This serves as an altar on which are laid offerings, consisting of blue beads, fragments of pottery or of purple basalt, bits of china, the locks of guns, etc. The ploughs of the Arabs are left inside the circle with perfect safety. In some cases sacred trees grow close by. These seem to be the counterparts of the ancient "Gilgals," or sacred rings. *Pal. Fund Reports*, 1881, pp. 278-9. Conder, *Moab and Syrian Stone Lore, passim.*

requirement of the Law, that there should be one great national religious centre.[1] Other kings had attempted it, but had failed : succeeding perhaps in removing those which were merely idolatrous, but feeling it impossible to run counter to the popular prejudices by destroying such as were consecrated to Jehovah.[2] But Hezekiah had the stern zeal of a Puritan. Far and near, through both Judah and Israel, the high places were thrown down, in spite of an opposition so serious that it was used, many years after, by the Assyrian general, to stir up popular feeling against him as a daring and impious innovator, who had provoked the anger of God on the nation by this interference with His worship.[3] The sun-pillars—apparently obscene emblems[4]—were, also, everywhere shattered in pieces; and the foul Asherahs cut down. Nor did the reform stop here. Strong-minded and intelligent in his faith, Hezekiah was able to realize that even the most venerable relic became a source of evil, worthy of destruction, when abused by inveterate superstí-

[1] Deut. xii. 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26 ; xiv. 23 ; xvi. 5, 6. Josh. ix. 27. 1 Kings viii. 29. The distinct command to have only one central place of religious worship is first met with in Deuteronomy, and the latest critics placidly affirm that it was invented and foisted into the sacred text during the period of the struggle to put down high places. A copy of the original Deuteronomy, they tell us, was found in Josiah's reign, and manipulated to suit the views of the age. In the existence of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, however, we have the principle of a centralized worship, and it is enforced by the command in Leviticus (xvii. 4, 5), that sacrifices be offered only at the door of the sacred tent. But Wellhausen gets over this by saying that the Tabernacle is later than the temple, and was copied from it! *Geschichte Israels*, vol. i. p. 38. Stade is equally adventurous in his explanation. He ascribes Deuteronomy and Leviticus to the time of the Exile (*Geschichte des V. Israel*, p. 72), and, like Wellhausen—in fact, as his echo—takes for granted that Deuteronomy was worked up to suit the ideas of the last days of Judah and those of Ezra. Yet Stade must have the palm of literary boldness, for he laughs at the idea of a residence in Egypt, an Exodus, or a conquest under Joshua, and indeed treats all the historical documents of the Old Testament as a mass of legend with a few grains of truth.

[2] 2 Chron. xiv. 3 ; xvii. 6, compare with 1 Kings xv. 14. 2 Chron. xx. 33.

[3] 2 Kings xviii. 22. 2 Chron. xxxii. 12.

[4] Possibly sun-dials, see p. 144. But Phallus-worship was a characteristic of the temples of Baal and of Asherah.

tion. The brazen serpent, made in the wilderness nearly 800 years before, at the command of Moses, had escaped the perils of many centuries, and stood in the midst of Jerusalem as well-nigh the most sacred of the national treasures. It had, however, become a source of evil. An altar had been built before it on which incense was offered, as if the relic possessed inherent divine power. To Hezekiah it remained, however, only the instrument, worthless in itself, through which Jehovah had once chosen to work ; only "a piece of brass." There was too much superstition in the land to leave so specious a pretext for its indulgence, and the brazen serpent was therefore taken down and broken up. False æsthetics had no hold on the vigorous-minded king. As in every age of true religious zeal, they fell into the background before higher considerations.[1]

Till Hezekiah's reign the Passover seems to have been kept privately in each household or family group over the land, where kept at all.[2] But the temple was henceforth to be the one centre of public worship. Hitherto the national religion had been mainly local. Not only were many hill-tops the sites of shrines ; other spots, such as Beersheba and Hebron, were also famous ancient sanctuaries still in use. But to secure a purification of religion, centralization was necessary. He determined, therefore, to hold a great national Passover at Jerusalem. The error in reckoning caused by the shortness of the lunar months had, however, made the original time for the feast, in the first month, no longer exact ; the barley harvest, after which it should be held, as a spring feast, falling, now, nearly a month later. The date for the festival was therefore trans-

[1] See *Stones of Venice*, vol. ii. p. 103. *Latter-day Pamphlets*, p. 34.
[2] Graetz, vol. ii. p. 228.

ferred to the second month, and a similar error in the calendar henceforth prevented by the intercalation of an extra month, when necessary, to adjust the lunar to the solar year.[1] Such additional months had long been in use at Nineveh, with which Judæa had been closely connected since the reign of Ahaz.

The ruin of the northern kingdom had touched the heart of the people of Judah, and their ancient bitterness of feeling had passed into tender regret. The rural population which had not been swept away to Assyria were now the objects of a loving sympathy, that sought to cheer and draw them closer to their brethren in the south. Messengers were therefore sent through the whole land, from Dan to Beersheba, inviting all to come to the Passover at Jerusalem, but as a rule their invitation was rejected with contemptuous scorn.[2] The wreck of the nation had finally lapsed into heathenism and had ceased to be Israelites except in blood, nor could even that be claimed after a few years, intermarriages with other races becoming habitual. Some, however, were still found in Manasseh, Asher, and Zebulon, who honoured the God of their fathers, and gladly accepted the summons.

For such a gathering fitting preparations had to be made. Strict in his obedience to the Mosaic law, Hezekiah caused the Holy City to be thoroughly purified. The idolatrous altars raised by Ahaz[3] for burnt offerings and for incense, were destroyed, and their material thrown into the Kedron, below the walls. The temple itself had been purified at the beginning of the reign, and repaired where necessary. Enthusiasm spread through the whole community. Priests

[1] Graetz, vol. ii. p. 228.
[2] 2 Chron. xxx. 10.
[3] 2 Chron. xxviii. 24.

and Levites who had neglected to complete their ceremonial cleansing were roused to do so, and, when the great day at length arrived, stood in their prescribed places, after the order fixed since the time of David. As in former times, the household fathers, where duly "clean," sacrificed the lambs for their families, but Levites took the place of those who were "unclean." Nor was any ritual inexactness allowed to mar the universal joy. Many worshippers from the northern kingdom, ignorant, perhaps, in the dark times that had passed over their land, of the formal observances demanded, had failed to comply with them. But Hezekiah, ever earnest after the reality, and comparatively indifferent to the merely outward, decreed that they should join in the feast as well as others; not forgetting to pray for them, lest they should suffer, as threatened in Leviticus, for neglect of the commandments of the Law.[1]

Then came the great celebration, with such glory of chants and instrumental music, such wealth of gifts for sacrifice, such vast multitudes in attendance, and such general gladness, as recalled the solemnity of the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon.[2] Seven days, the legal duration, were not long enough for such a jubilee; the feast was prolonged for seven days more.

All that could be done by mere outward means towards a permanent revival of the ancient faith was thus being carried out. For the first time, the tithes were formally secured for the Levites and priests, and registers of birth strictly kept, to secure their legal standing.[3] If regularity in public worship; exactness of its observance, and removal of

[1] Lev. xv. 31. Num. ix. 6. This statement shews that two books of the Pentateuch, at least, were then known.

[2] 2 Chron. vii. 1-10; xxx. 26. [3] 2 Chron. xxxi.

everything idolatrous, could have secured a healthy religious life in the nation, it would have been attained.

Amidst all, moreover, Isaiah and other prophets were zealously proclaiming, from day to day, the highest spiritual truths. Always lofty in their morality, and illustrious in their defence of popular liberty and national independence, they had gradually risen to purer and more far-reaching conceptions of the future. The hope of a great Messiah had become more distinct from the time of David. Joel had prophesied of a terrible day of Jehovah, when judgment executed on the heathen in the Valley of Jehoshaphat would introduce a golden age, and the Spirit would be poured on all flesh. Amos had cheered the faithful of his day by foretelling that the fallen tent of David would again be raised.[1] Hosea had told those of the next generation that the children of Israel would one day return, and seek Jehovah, their God, and David, their king; and, like his predecessors, he had painted the happiness of that time. But the development of a higher spiritual tone, under Hezekiah, purified and sublimed these glad anticipations. A bright hopefulness and wide survey of the future, like that which had once characterized the young nation under Moses and Joshua, re-appeared, now, when the State was slowly sinking.

Pious souls in the past had cherished the fond hope of a great kingdom of God to be realized in Israel, and its triumph necessarily implied a fitting and victorious leader and head. The glory of David, and the unbroken succession of his House in Judah, coupled with the sacred intimations of prophets, naturally led to the conviction that the expected Messiah could spring only from him. But it was Isaiah who first realized in their fulness the attributes essential in the

[1] Amos ix. 11.

Expected One, as the perfect Head of the true Theocracy. Even the best among the kings had come short of them; the hopes of the godly had been ever deferred. Yet, so much the more did the ideal of the king needed to introduce the reign of God among men, clear itself from all human mists and colourings in such a mind as that of Isaiah. He felt that the promise had gone forth that God would "stablish the throne of David's kingdom for ever,"[1] and nothing could shake his faith in it. Alike before the despairing and oppressed, or the disbelieving and mocking, he proclaimed his firm trust in this great hope. Nor did he falter even when the hosts of Sennacherib seemed to threaten the immediate ruin of the State, for his confidence never wavered, even when the Assyrian was at the gates of Jerusalem. To him we owe the bodying forth of the expectations of the past, in utterances which became the stay and support of succeeding ages. The Hope of Israel must be one who Himself fulfilled all the demands of God, the Supreme King. A divine might and glory must dwell in Him, to enable Him thus to realize an ideal in which all before Him had failed. If He came short of it, the perfect kingdom of God could never be attained. But, if thus completely fulfilling God's law, He must be the Messiah—the glorious King of the true people of Jehovah. That He should come, was to be the hope, the yearning, the supplication of all. It was blessed even to look trustingly towards His advent, and try to realize personally a glimpse of His perfections!

From Isaiah's day, the Messiah thus first vividly held before the nation, with all the literary charms of inspired genius, was the absorbing subject of Jewish desire and ex-

[1] 2 Sam. vii. 13. 1 Kings xi. 39.

pectation. That He would assuredly appear in due time it was deemed impious to question; how He would do so, henceforth engrossed the thoughts of the race. That He should spring from the root of David was still proclaimed by the prophets, but His external glory or natural descent were treated as of altogether inferior moment. Such a Messiah could only come as the Prince of Peace; violence would be in contradiction to His nature and aims. The time of His appearance, however, was not as yet revealed even to Isaiah. Still, the glorious ideal was before mankind. From it other prophets caught enthusiasm, and the godly of generation after generation walked in its light.[1]

But the bright visions of Isaiah and Micah were far from fulfilment. The moral cancer of heathenism had gained too deep a hold on the nation to be eradicated by the zeal of any prince, however zealous, and the prophetic visions of future Messianic glory had yet to be darkened by denunciations and warnings. The goodness of Judah, like that of Ephraim, proved to be as the morning cloud or the early dew that goeth away.[2]

[1] Ewald, vol. iii. p. 707.

[2] Hos. vi. 4. The "morning cloud and early dew" are the vapour of the sea wind, which, after being borne over the land by the breeze that sets in from the west each evening, and having watered all vegetation in its passage eastward, is condensed into thick clouds by the cold of the night. Each morning the masses of vapour thus formed are broken into snowy clouds by the first beams of the sun as it rises above the level of the hills of Moab, and very soon the last traces vanish from valley and rounded height as the heat of the day kindles. Looking eastward from the housetops of Jerusalem the deep slope towards the Jordan is filled with white fog, while as yet the dawn has not come, but, with the first level beams that smite through it, one sees it rise in broken masses of purest white and richest opal, till it has floated up into the ether and lost itself in the stainless azure.

CHAPTER XIV.

JUDAH AFTER THE FALL OF SAMARIA.

The Prophets Micah and Isaiah.

While the strenuous exertions required of Hezekiah in restoring the ancient religion, reveal the moral and social corruption of the time, the utterances of the prophets of his reign speak no less forcibly of the deep shadow which accompanied its splendours.

So far as we know, the first of the national prophet-preachers of these later times had been Micaiah or Micah, in the reign of Ahab. After him, men like Joel, Amos, and Hosea had risen, the Savonarolas and Bernards of their day; culminating in the great inspired orators of the reign of Hezekiah. His reign was the Augustan age of prophecy in every sense. Not only the transcendent genius of Isaiah, but that of Micah of Moresheth—perhaps Mareshah, south of Gath—still shew in the inspired writings which bear their names, the striking addresses to which their generation listened.

Very little is known of Micah beyond the fact that he came from the neighbourhood of Gath,[1] and was thus a native of the Maritime Plain, with its fiery summer heat; its luxuriant vineyards, orchards, and cornfields; its busy towns, and its glimpses of the great sea from every point

[1] Mic. i. 14. As late as the time of Jerome a hamlet in the neighbourhood of Eleutheropolis was famous as the home of Micah, and a grave there, over which a Christian church had been built, was shewn as his. Riehm.

which rises higher than the sand-hills along the shore. The days of the old prophets had passed away. Elisha had lived as a staid citizen in Samaria; Joel had passed his days quietly in Jerusalem; Isaiah was a member of its higher society. The hairy cloak and leathern girdle of Elijah were traditions of the past. But in Micah his austerity and fierce energy seemed to have returned. The strange Oriental fervour of his manner, the corresponding singularity of his dress, and the wild cries and piercing wails with which he accompanied his public utterances, have already been described.[1] His style, sometimes abrupt and obscure, was all his own. Its rich and varied imagery spoke of his birth and life in the lowlands. The dew, the shower upon the grass, the flocks in their folds, the luxuriant vineyards; the single vine and fig tree in the rural homesteads; the towers of the flocks; the sheaves on the threshing-floor; the lion among the sheep; the treading of olives; the gathering of summer fruit, and the gleaning of the vintage supply his metaphors and illustrations.[2] That his house was close to part of the scene of war, helps to explain his keen interest in the progress of the Assyrian arms.

Born apparently in the reign of Jotham, or at the close of that of Uzziah, he had seen the apostasy of Ahaz, and the manifold wickedness which had followed, and still abounded under the good Hezekiah. The opening verses of his prophecies, as they now stand, date from before the siege of Samaria, but the successive sections were probably delivered as different addresses, afterwards collected, like those of Jeremiah, and read, perhaps, as a whole,[3] at stated times, to the people. Such preaching, by one so intensely earnest,

[1] See p. 347.

[2] Mic. i. 8; ii. 12; iv. 4, 8, 12; v. 8; vi. 15; vii. 1.

[3] Jer. xxxvi. 2, 4, 6.

must have had overpowering influence in any community, and it is not therefore wonderful to find that the elders of the city at a later time ascribed to it the great revival at the beginning of Hezekiah's reign, and even the conversion of the king himself.[1]

The traditions of the great earthquake in the reign of Uzziah may have supplied the sublime imagery with which he commences.[2]

"I. 2. Give ear," says he, "all ye peoples![3] hearken, O land, and all that is therein![4] The Lord Jehovah appeareth as a witness against you; the Lord from His holy Temple-palace above.[5]

"3. For, lo, Jehovah comes forth from his place; He descends and sets His feet on the mountain-heights of the land; 4. the mountains melt under Him, the valleys cleave asunder; like wax before the fire, like (the) water (of the wintry torrents) rushing down the steeps.[6] 5. All this is for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the House of Israel.[7] And what is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what is the sin of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?[8]

"6. Therefore will I make Samaria a ruin-heap of the field; I will turn it into vineyard plantations; I will roll down its stones into the valley beneath, and make bare its foundations. 7. All its carved images of stone will be shattered in pieces; all the gifts presented to the idol temples (from the money gained by lewdness), will be burned by fire,[9] and (the site of) its idol statues will I make desolate. For by the pay of harlots they came, and they shall be carried off[10] to grace (the) harlot temples (of Assyria).

[1] Jer. xxvi. 17–19. See Pusey's *Minor Prophets*, p. 290.

[2] In the storm about to burst over Samaria, he sees Jehovah going forth from his heavenly palace, and marching over the hills of Palestine, to visit with righteous indignation the sins of the northern kingdom.

[3] Mic. i. 2–16. [4] Literally, "and its fulness."

[5] Not the temple of Jerusalem. See ver. 3.

[6] The autumn rains form great torrents which sweep down as floods from the hills.

[7] Jacob and Israel = the nation as a whole.

[8] The apostasy of the land had always spread from the capital. Jeroboam I. made Israel to sin. Ahab of Samaria introduced Baal worship; Jehu of Samaria restored the worship of the calves; Solomon built high places to false gods on Olivet; and Ahaz had gone still further.

[9] Knobel thinks the gifts were not those made to idols, but the wealth of the city.

[10] They were probably those of silver and gold. Hos. xiii. 2. See Dan. i. 2 2 Sam. viii. 11. Jos., *Ant.*, X. xi. 1.

"8. At the thought of this I wail and howl; I go stripped and barefoot:[1] I wail like the jackals and roar like the ostriches! 9. For her wounds are mortal: they reach even to Judah; to the gate of my own people, to Jerusalem! 10. Tell it not in Gath! weep not in Acre.[2] In Beth-aphrah[3] roll yourselves in sorrow in the dust. 11. Go forth, ye people of Saphir,[4] naked even to shame; ye inhabitants of Zaanan,[5] go not out of your town to mourn at Beth-ezel, for its own grief denies you a shelter. 12. The inhabitant of Maroth[6] trembles for his goods, for evil has come down from Jehovah to the gate of Jerusalem! 13. Bind the chariot to the swift horse, ye people of Lachish (to flee from the enemy)! Ye were the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion; for in you (first) were found the transgressions of Israel![7]

"14. Therefore wilt thou, O Judah, be forced to give up Moresheth of Gath (as a treaty-gift to the foe).[8] The houses of Achzib[9] will prove a lie to the kings of Judah (they will pass away from them like the dried-up brooks of summer). 15. A conqueror will I bring to thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah;[10] the great men of Israel shall flee (even as far as) to Adullam[11] (to hide in its caves)! 16. Cut off thy locks (O daughter of Zion), make thy head bare in sorrow for the sons of thy joy; make broad thy baldness like that of the vulture;[12] for they are gone forth into captivity from thee!"

[1] Septuagint. 2 Sam. xv. 30; Isa. xx. 2.

[2] De Wette. Ewald. Kleinert. Knobel. Acre = the weeping places.

[3] The dusty place.

[4] The lovely town. Probably one of the three villages of Suâfir, near Ashdod.

[5] Going forth.

[6] Bitterness.

[7] Diestel supposes this refers to the sun-horses and sun-chariots introduced to Jerusalem from Lachish, whither they had come from the northern kingdom. 2 Kings xxiii. 11. But it may refer to idolatry generally.

[8] Kleinert.

[9] Achzib = winter torrent, or "deceitful." A Nachal Achzib is a deceitful brook—that is, one that dries up in summer and disappoints the thirsty traveller.

Achzib was so far south that the Edomites repeatedly took it. Jos., *Ant.*, XIII. ix. 1.

[10] Mareshah = "conquered village." The play on the names throughout is very characteristic of Hebrew oratory and poetry.

[11] Mareshah and Adullam (labyrinth) would be filled with the fugitive Hebrews, fleeing before the Assyrians. In 1 Chron. iv. 39-41, it is said that various heads of clans among the Simeonites fled into the south of Judah in the reign of Hezekiah.

[12] Shaving the head was the sign of mourning. Job i. 20. Jer. vii. 29. In Deut. xiv. 1, it was forbidden to shave the forehead. The Eastern vulture is bald, not the eagle, as in the English version.

Having proclaimed the judgments impending on Judah, the prophet, in the second chapter, denounces the prevailing wickedness, and predicts a fate like that of Samaria. He also exposes the deceptive promises of the false prophets.

"II. 1. Woe to them [1] that plot iniquity, and contrive evil on their beds, (to carry it out) with the first morning light, because they can do so! 2. They covet fields and take them by violence; houses, and seize them; they oppress the poor man and his house; the prosperous man and his inheritance.

"3. Therefore thus says Jehovah: 'Behold, I purpose evil against this race; evil from which you shall not remove your necks. Ye shall not then walk any longer haughtily, for it shall be a time of evil!'

"4. In that day shall they raise a song (of derision) against you, and wail a lament for you, saying: ('All is over with us;') 'we are utterly spoiled; the mighty God [2] has taken back the inheritance of my people. How has He torn mine from me! He has given our fields to the foe!' 5. Thus no one will henceforth stretch the measuring cord for thee, (O man of Judah,) to set apart for thee a portion in the congregation of Jehovah! [3]

"6. 'Stop your prophesying,' [4] cry they; 'you shall no longer prophesy respecting such things,[5] nor shall we hear such evil speaking.'[6] 7. (What a thing to say,) O House of Jacob. Does Jehovah act thus from impatience (or revenge)? Will your calamity be of His doing (and not rather from your sins)? [7] 'Are not my words friendly,' says He, 'to him that walks uprightly?' [8] 8. But now have My people risen as foes against Me. Ye strip the mantle [9] from the fugitive (who has escaped from the Assyrians, and is making his way to the south), having left

[1] Mic. ii. 1–13. [2] They hardly dare name Him. Amos v. 13.

[3] They would have no measured lot of ground in the land, as they had had heretofore.

[4] The word used is from the verb "to drop," as the dew or rain, and refers to the words dropping from the lips. Kleinert makes it mean "foam not at the mouth"—"foam they."

[5] The affairs of the great. [6] A paraphrase.

[7] Eichhorn translates thus: "'Prophesy not,' say they; 'let *these* prophesy' (alluding to false prophets). And then the prophet answers: 'If they do not prophesy, your shame and punishment will not be removed.'"

[8] Hitzig. Emendation. The following lines are a paraphrase.

[9] Two kinds of upper clothing are mentioned, the Salmah = the Haik or the Abba of modern Arabs, a large square blanket or sheet—and the Eder, a special kind of mantle of sheepskin, among the poor. Leyrer, in Herzog, vol. vii. p. 27.

war behind. 9. The (very) women of My people (who have fled hither from the enemy), ye have driven forth from the peaceful homes they had formed. Ye have forced them to go to other peoples (for safety), and have thus cut them off for ever from My glory.[1] 10. Up! and begone, for this land will no longer be your rest; it is foul with your offences: it is plague-stricken, and shall be utterly waste.'

"11. If a false and designing man say, 'I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink,' this people take him for their prophet.[2] 12. 'I (Jehovah,' says He,) 'will gather thee all, O Jacob, I will surely bring together again the remnant of Israel; I will bring all into one, like sheep into their fold: like a flock in its pasture: till both fold and wide pasture teem with men. 13. And He that is mighty will go before them, and will force their way through every obstacle, and they will flood through the gate (of their house of bondage) and stream forth through it. Their King will go before them; even Jehovah at their head.'"[3]

Such were the delusions set before the people by the false prophets, but Jehovah, through His true servants, spoke in a very different strain.

"III. 1. (So these men talk, but thus do) I, Jehovah, speak to you: 'Give ear, O ye heads of Jacob;[4] ye princes of the house of Israel![5] Is it not your part to keep to what is right? 2. But ye hate what is good and love what is evil. Ye take the very skin off My people, and the flesh from their bones; 3. ye eat the flesh of My people and flay off their skin; ye hew their bones and cut them in pieces as for the pot, and as flesh for the cauldron!' 4. In the day of wrath you shall cry to Jehovah, but He will not hear you; He will hide His face from you in that time, because your deeds are evil!

"5. Thus saith Jehovah concerning the (false) prophets that lead astray My people: who, as long as they have food in their teeth, cry 'Peace,' and foretell prosperity, but declare him who does not put meat in their mouths an enemy of God. 6. For this, a night shall come over you in which ye shall have no vision; darkness in which ye

[1] Among the heathen they were far from the temple and the knowledge of Jehovah.

[2] Ibn Ezra, Hitzig, Struensee, J. D. Michaelis, Tholuck, Kleinert, Ewald, and others agree that what follows is the utterance of the false prophet.

[3] Their ancient limits will be too small for the reunited twelve tribes.

[4] Mic. iii. 1–12.

[5] These names must apply to Judah after Samaria had fallen.

shall not divine; the sun shall go down over these prophets, and the day over them shall be dark![1] 7. Then shall the seers blush; the diviners be covered with shame; they shall all cover the lip, because no answer to their predictions comes from God!

"8. But *I* am filled with power by the Spirit of Jehovah; filled with uprightness and boldness, to tell Jacob his transgression and Israel his sin![2]

"9. O hear this, ye heads of the House of Jacob, ye princes of the House of Israel, who have a hatred of the right, and make crooked everything just; 10. who think to build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem by unrighteousness. 11. You chiefs give judgment for reward; you priests (who should freely teach the law), pervert it for hire;[3] you (who style yourselves) prophets divine for money. And yet you appeal to Jehovah and say, 'Is not Jehovah among us; no evil can touch us!'

"12. Therefore, on your account, Zion shall be ploughed as a field. Jerusalem shall be laid in ruins, and the temple hill be turned to a wooded height!"[4]

Such a prophecy respecting the temple, already the object of superstitious veneration, was fitted to rouse the fiercest passions of the hearers, as far gentler words, in later times, kindled the popular fury against our Lord and St. Stephen. Micah, therefore, forthwith soothes the mind of his audience by telling them:

"IV. 1. Yet,[5] in days to come,[6] the mountain of the House of Jehovah shall be established as the highest[7] of the mountains, and be

[1] Their false predictions will be disappointed by the political night that will fall on the nation, and by the rebuke given them thus from above.

[2] How clearly this reveals the bitter opposition he had to bear.

[3] Literally "prophesy" or "teach," but, it is implied, unfaithfully.

[4] The word used is Ya'ar, the modern "Wa'ar" of the fellahin dialect, by which they indicate the pathless, rocky, unenclosed, barren tracts of brushwood which cover many of the Palestine hills. Thus in Eccles. ii. 6, where Solomon is introduced saying that "he made him pools of water, to water therewith the wood," etc.—it should be, "the rough mountain scrub," etc. In fact he had cascades, or pools, falling from ledge to ledge, to water forest trees, etc., planted by him in picturesque heights. (Eccles. ii. 6.) It was in a Ya'ar that Jonathan found the honey; dripping apparently from a cleft in the rocks; the favourite resort of wild bees. (1 Sam. xiv. 27.) Here, the hill of Zion is to become a Ya'ar.

[5] Mic. iv. 1–4. [6] Literally, "at the end of days."

[7] Hitzig. Not on the top of other mountains. It shall be reckoned the most glorious of all mountains.

exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow to it. 2. And many heathen nations shall set out to it, saying to each other, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah: to the House of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.' For the Law shall go forth from Zion; the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.[3] And God will judge between many nations; He will give decisions between strong peoples afar off. Then will they beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.[4] Every one will then sit under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make him afraid; the mouth of Jehovah of Hosts has spoken it."[1]

Kindled by the thought of this glorious future, the prophet now builds on it his sure hope that God will one day bring back the captives of His race to their own land, and restore their glory. Under their king, they shall triumph over all their foes, and God will reign as their supreme head, for, like all the nations of Palestine, the Jews found their ideal in a theocracy. Meanwhile the people, touched by the glorious picture the prophet has drawn, enthusiastically welcome the prospect.

"IV. 5. 'Let other nations,' say they, 'walk every one in the name of its god; we shall walk in the name of Jehovah, our God, for ever and ever.'"[2]

The prophet then resumes:

"6. In that day,[3] says Jehovah, I will gather the lame, and assemble the far scattered; the race that I have afflicted; 7. and I will make the lame into a remnant; those driven out into a strong nation; and Jehovah will reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth, for ever.

[1] Ewald makes the words ending here, a quotation, beginning with "Come, let us." This picture of peace in the happy future of the world passed, through the Jewish Sibylline verses, and possibly from the writings of the prophets themselves, to the Roman poets. Virg., *Georg.*, i. 507. Ovid., *Fasti*, i. 699. Martial, xiv. 34.

[2] Mic. iv. 5. [3] Mic. iv. 6–13.

"8. And thou, O Ophel,[1] the tower of the flocks, the hill of the daughter of Zion; to thee shall thy former dominion return; the kingdom shall come back to the daughter of Jerusalem!

"9. But now, wherefore dost thou raise a great cry? Is there no longer a king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? Is this why trembling has seized thee, like a woman in travail?

"10. Tremble, indeed, and be in pain, like a woman in travail, O daughter of Zion. For, truly thou must now go forth from thy city, and dwell in the field, and come even to Babylon.[2] But there thou shalt be delivered; there will Jehovah deliver thee from the hand of thine enemies!

"11. Even now many (heathen) peoples have gathered themselves against thee,[3] and say, 'We shall defile Zion (by the blood we shall shed in her); our eyes shall have their desire on her.'

"12. But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah; they do not understand His counsel—that He has gathered them to be themselves trodden under foot, like sheaves on the threshing floor!

"13. 'Up, and thresh them, O daughter of Zion'—says Jehovah—'for I will make thy horn iron; thy hoofs brass; thou shalt crush to pieces many peoples,[4] and offer up their spoil to Jehovah; their treasures to the Lord of the whole earth!

"V. 1. Gather now in troops,[5] thou daughter of many sons![6] They will presently lay siege against us; they will, as it were, smite the ruler of Israel on the cheek with a staff."[7]

Yet, God has not forgotten His people. A great deliverer—the Messiah King—will appear to raise up again the theocracy. Till now the prophets had predicted only his

[1] Kleinert. Ophel was the southern spur of Mount Moriah, and in those days formed, with the part of Moriah not enclosed in the temple grounds, the site of the City of David. The citizens themselves might be regarded as a flock guarded by the watch-tower, on Ophel. Moriah is called Zion, in this verse.

[2] At this time the kingdom of Babylon was yet in the distant future. Assyria was still in its glory, with Babylon as its dependency.

[3] The Assyrians, under whose standards many nations served.

[4] The figure is from the oxen treading the threshing floor. Their feet break the straw into fine fragments, in which condition it becomes Teben, the fodder of all domestic beasts in Palestine, and, indeed, in Western Asia.

[5] Mic. v. 1. [6] Paraphrase. A difficult expression.

[7] Sargon says he "subdued the land of Judah." This must have been in 710. Layard's *Inscriptions*, pl. xxxiii. 8.

descent from David. Micah goes further and names the very place from which He is to come.

"V. 2. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah;[1] small though thou be among the thousands[2] of Judah, out of thee shall come forth, for Me, a Ruler over Israel, whose going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.[3]

"But He will deliver them up to their adversity till she that beareth has brought forth—(till Bethlehem has seen this Messiah Prince born), and until the remnant of His brethren (still in exile), return to (those of) the children of Israel (who remain in the territory of the Ten Tribes). 4. He shall stand and rule[4] in the might of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah, His God. Then shall they dwell in security,[5] for He shall be great even to the ends of the earth. 5. And He shall give peace. When the Assyrian comes into our land; when he treads in our palaces, then shall He raise against Him seven shepherds and eight leaders of the people.[6] 6. And they shall devour Assyria with the sword: the land of Nimrod in its gates. Thus shall He deliver from the Assyrian when he comes into our land, and treads within our borders.

"7. Then will the remnant of Jacob be in the midst of many nations like the fertilizing night-mist[7] from Jehovah; as the showers

[1] Mic. v. 2–9.

[2] The districts comprising 1,000 of a population. A counterpart of our "hundreds." Ewald, Noyes, and Eichhorn translate the words "too small to be reckoned amongst the," etc.

[3] Vulgate. So Luther. Ewald, "whose origin is from of old, from the most ancient days." De Wette, "from of old from the days of the foretime." Noyes, "from the ancient age, from the days of old." Kleinert, "from the remote past, from the days of the foretime." Septuagint, like the Vulgate. The words translated in our Version "from everlasting," are translated in vii. 14, "from of old."

[4] "Be a shepherd." [5] De Wette. Eichhorn.

[6] An endless number of great leaders will stand at the side of the Messiah, or Anointed Deliverer, to help him. To what verse 6 refers I have no idea.

[7] Dew, in the strict sense, falls in Palestine only in winter, when it is of little use, as it then rains in tropical torrents. In summer and autumn, when dew is much needed, there is none. The cloudless skies leave no moisture in the air to descend in this form when the earth is cooled at night. In these months, however, a heavy mist is brought each night over the land by the prevailing west winds - the moisture from the Mediterranean - and is condensed into fine rain, which wonderfully revives the parched herbage. It comes about twelve o'clock. To this, so unspeakably grateful in a hot country, Scripture always refers when it uses the word tal - translated in our version "dew." The equivalent in Arabic means "the small rain." There is no need of irrigation, thanks to this, in Palestine, though for half the year,

upon the grass, which thenceforth grows without waiting for (the will of) man or tarrying for the sons of men. 8. The residue of Jacob will be among the heathen, in the midst of many peoples, like a lion among the beasts of the wood;[1] as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who, when he passes, treads down and tears, no one being able to deliver. 9. Thine hand shall be lifted high above thy oppressors, and all thy enemies shall be destroyed."

In this day of triumph Israel will once more be purged from every defilement. They have trusted in horses and chariots; in strong cities; in heathen superstitions; in idols; in obscene Asherahs—but all these will be removed. The people must trust in God alone.

"V. 10. It shall come to pass in that day,[2] saith Jehovah, that I will take away thy horses from the midst of thee, and destroy thy chariots; 11. I will destroy the fortified cities of thy land, and throw down all thy fortresses; 12. I will root out the black arts from thy hand, and thou shalt no longer have heathen diviners of the clouds. 13. I will cut off thy graven images and thy idol statues from thy midst, and thou shalt no longer bow down to the work of thy hands. 14. I will pluck up thy Asherahs[3] from the midst of thee, and overthrow thy vainly trusted defence.[4] 15. I will execute vengeance in anger and in fury on the peoples that have not hearkened to My voice."

The sixth chapter appears to have been a distinct address, taking the sublime form of a controversy of Jehovah with His people. The book could not open and close with

at least, there is no rain. The fields on the sea-coast plain of Sharon yield abundantly by the moisture of the night-wind, and it fills out vast crops of watermelons, grown on the sand at Cæsarea.

[1] Ya'ar. See p. 369.

[2] Mic. v. 10–15.

[3] The clinging fondness for the worship of nature and its powers under the symbol of a tree is striking. A green tree in the neighbourhood of Mecca still receives divine honours. Other Arabs venerate a particular date palm as the shrine of an indwelling goddess. In Mukan an ancient elm was worshipped. The Persians in many places do homage to great old trees as abodes of saints, and call them Sheiks or Imâm. See note in Hitzig. In Palestine one often sees trees more or less covered with small pieces of coloured cottons, hung on them from an idea of their sanctity.

[4] Eichhorn translates, "and destroy thy sacred groves."

threatenings. True to his office, the prophet hastens to give a clear statement of the means by which all hindrances to the enjoyment of present good, and the fear of future visitations, might be at once removed.

"VI. 1. Hear,[1] ye now what Jehovah says. 'Rouse thyself; carry thy dispute before the mountains; let the hills hear thy voice!'[2]

"2. Hear, O ye mountains, the controversy of Jehovah; hear, ye (rocks, the) eternal foundations of the earth! For Jehovah has a controversy with His people; He will plead (His case) with Israel!

"3. O my people, what (evil) have I done to you? Wherein have I been grievous to you? Testify against me! 4. I brought thee up from the land of Egypt: I redeemed thee from the land of slavery, and sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (to go) before thee. 5. My people, remember what Balak, the king of Moab, devised,[3] and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him.[4] (Remember what happened on the way) from Shittim to Gilgal,[5] that ye may know the righteousness of Jehovah! 6. 'Wherewith' (asked Balak), 'shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? 7. Has Jehovah pleasure in thousands of rams, or in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born (as a sin-offering) for my offences; the fruit of my body (as an atonement) for the sin of my soul?' 8. (But Balaam answered, setting light by the merely outward.) 'He hath shewn thee, O man, what is good, and what does Jehovah ask of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Having thus reminded them of the true requirements of Jehovah, the prophet once more denounces the wickedness of Jerusalem and threatens it with Divine wrath.

"VI. 9. The voice of Jehovah calls to the city,[6] and the wise hear

[1] Mic. vi. 1–8.

[2] Jehovah condescends to plead His cause against Israel: calling the mountains and hills of the land to witness between them: and leaving the people themselves to the verdict of their own hearts. See Josh. xxiv. 27.

[3] Hebrew, yāăts. In A. V. "counselled," "consulted," "purposed," "devised."

[4] Such allusions to the Book of Numbers prove conclusively that it must have been known long before Micah's day. See Numbers, chapters xxii. to xxv.

[5] Thus completed by De Wette.

[6] Mic. vi. 9–16.

Thee, O Lord (with awe).[1] Give ear to the threatening and to Him who has appointed it! 10. Are there not yet in the houses of the wicked, unrighteous treasures, and the hateful false[2] measure? 11. Is he pure who has false balances, and a girdle purse[3] of deceitful weights?[4] 12. Is she (Zion) pure whose rich men are full of violence, whose inhabitants speak lies, whose tongue in their mouth is deceitful?

"13. Therefore I will smite thee sorely, and make thee desolate, on account of thy sins. 14. Thou shalt eat and not be satisfied: thine hunger shall still be within thee; thou shalt hide (thy precious things) but thou shalt not save them (from the enemy), and what (thou thinkest) thou hast saved will I give to the sword. 15. Thou shalt sow but shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives but not anoint thee with oil; and the grapes, yet not drink the wine! 16. For you keep the statutes of Omri;[5] you follow all the works of the House of Ahab, and walk in their counsels. Therefore I will make thee (Jerusalem) a desolation,[6] and thy inhabitants a derision, and thou shalt bear the reproach of the nations."[7]

Grief at the fallen glory of his people—full of guilt and moral decay—overpowers the prophet, and he breaks into a lament over the small number of righteous men left.

"VII. 1. Woe is me![8] It is with me as at the gleaning of summer fruit; and at the gleaning of the vintage; there is no cluster left to eat; no early fig which my soul desireth.[9] 2. The good man has perished from the land; there are no longer any upright left among men! All lie in wait to shed blood; every one weaves plots against his brother. 3. Both their hands are eagerly given to do evil; the prince is bought; the judge gives decisions for a bribe; the great man tells him what his soul desires, and, together, they extort it from the falsely

[1] Eichhorn. Noyes says, "And the man of wisdom will discern thee." Ewald, "And verily it is salvation to fear Thy name." Hitzig, "Wisdom fears thy name."

[2] Over-small ephah.

[3] Light weights were generally carried in a purse in the girdle. Prov. vii. 20; xvi. 11. Isa. xlvi. 6. The word is literally "girdle."

[4] Literally, "stones." See also Lev. xix. 36. Deut. xxv. 13. 2 Sam. xiv. 26. Prov. xi. 1. Zech. v. 8.

[5] See p. 51.

[6] Literally, "astonishment."

[7] Septuagint.

[8] Mic. vii. 1-6.

[9] No good man left, such as my soul yearns to find.

accused.[1] 4. The best of them is like a brier; the most upright like a hedge of thorns, to the honest and poor.

"(But, O Lord, the day Thy seers have predicted;) the day of Thy visitation cometh; then shall their confusion follow!

"5. Depend not on a friend; put no confidence in a trusted one; keep (thy lips) the doors of thy mouth, from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6. For the son will betray the father; the daughter stand up against her mother; the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's foes will be his own household."[2]

But the prophet will not leave his people to despair. He sees Judah and Jerusalem hereafter penitent, and puts words of faith and returning love to God in their lips.

"VII. 'As for me'[3] (says he, speaking for and personifying Jerusalem and Judah). 7. 'I will look to Jehovah; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me! 8. Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; though I have fallen I will arise: though I now sit in darkness, Jehovah will be my light! 9. I will bear the wrath of Jehovah, for I have sinned against Him, till He plead my cause, and give judgment for me again; till He bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness. 10. Then, she[4] that is my enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her who said to me, 'Where is Jehovah, thy God?' My eyes shall feed on her;[5] she will be trodden down like the mire of the street.

"11. A day comes when thy walls (O Jerusalem) shall be rebuilt; a day when the decree for thy restoration shall be widely spread![6] 12. In that day[7] men shall come to thee from Assyria, and from the cities of Egypt, and from the Nile, to the Euphrates, even from sea to sea and from mountain to mountain, (from the east and west, the north and south).[8] 13. But the land (when they reach it) will be desolate, because of the sins of its inhabitants, and as the fruit of their doings."

In that day they shall cry to God :

[1] Septuagint. The great man asks, and the judge speaks soft words to him, and he has what he desires.

[2] His slaves and dependents. See Matt. x. 21, 35, 36, Luke xii. 53 ; xxi. 16.

[3] Mic. vii. 7–11.

[4] The heathen, now so haughty and triumphant.

[5] Jerusalem. [6] Text doubtful. [7] Mic., vii. 12-19.

[8] From the east and the west ; the north and the south.

"14. Feed Thy people with Thy shepherd's staff; the flock of Thine inheritance. Give them to dwell in the glades of Carmel; let them feed in Bashan and Gilead,[1] as in the days of old."

In answer to this supplication God gives a gracious promise.

"15. As in the days when thou camest forth from Egypt will I shew you marvellous things.

"16. The heathen shall see and be afraid of all your might.[2] They shall lay their hand on their mouth; their ears shall be deaf. 17. They shall lick the dust like the serpent; they shall creep out of their hiding places, as the crawling serpents creep (terrified) from their holes; they shall tremble before Jehovah our God, and shall fear before Thee!"

The prophet now closes in a burst of adoration:

"18. Who is a God like Thee; pardoning iniquity and (graciously) passing by the transgressions of the remnant of Thy heritage! He retains not His anger for ever, because He delights in mercy! 19. He will once more have compassion upon us; He will tread down our misdoings; He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. 20. Thou wilt shew the faithfulness to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham—which Thou hast sworn to our fathers from the days of old."

Such were some of the magnificent discourses to which the crowds in Jerusalem listened seven hundred years before Christ, when the humble huts and cottages, which afterwards became Rome, were still the homes of their first tenants.[3] But Micah was not alone in his outbursts of pathetic or splendid oratory. Audiences in the temple precincts or in the open spaces of the city heard Isaiah also, lifting up his voice as a preacher of righteousness. The twenty-eighth chapter of his prophecies was apparently delivered in the early years of Hezekiah, and vividly brings

[1] Now lost, but then regained.
[2] That of restored Israel. Literally, "their."
[3] Year of foundation of Rome, B.C. 753.

before us the man and his times. The Egyptian faction in Jerusalem had already sought to break the existing relations with Assyria, and to make a treaty with Pharaoh, but the prophet denounces the folly and peril of their proposal.

Like Micah, he commences by a terrible denunciation of Samaria, which was approaching its fall. The first verses have already been given.[1] But the true prophet is a messenger of wrath only that he may introduce promises of mercy, if the lessons be taken to heart. Ephraim, the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, must, indeed, perish, but—

"XXVIII. 5. In that day[2] (after Samaria has fallen), Jehovah of Hosts will be a glorious crown and a fair diadem to the remnant of His people: (instead of the withered crown of the glory of Samaria). 6. He will inspire him that sitteth as judge with a spirit of uprightness, and him that turneth back the battle to the gate with heroic strength."

But Judah as well as Ephraim was in danger by its sins. Widespread drunkenness—a phrase perhaps including, also, general pride and lawlessness—had destroyed Samaria. It would, also, ruin Judah. For—

"7. They, also (even the men of Jerusalem), stagger through wine, and reel through strong drink. Priest and false prophet stagger through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they reel through strong drink; they stagger as they announce their visions; they reel as they give forth their (oracles and) judgments. 8. All their tables are covered with drunken vomit; there is not a clean spot on them left."

But such reproaches were bitterly resented:

"9. 'Whom' (say they) 'will he (thus) teach knowledge, and whom would he make to understand his (so-called) revelations? Are we babes just weaned from the milk, and taken from the breasts? 10.

[1] P. 244. [2] Isa. xxviii. 5-29.

For he gives us command on command; command on command; rule upon rule; rule upon rule; a word here, a word there.'" [1]

Isaiah, however, has his answer ready:

"11. (Yes, it shall be as you say: the same thing over and over; Jehovah will still speak to this people as heretofore: but as they mock me with stammering lips, it shall be) through the stammering lips and strange tongue of the Assyrians [2] that He will speak to (that is, punish) them; (not as till now, in gentleness and love). 12. He has told them (through His own prophets their wise course) the true rest to the weary (land) and its true refreshment; but they would not hear.[3] 13. Henceforth (therefore) the word of Jehovah to them will (indeed) be (as ye say), 'Command on command, command on command; rule upon rule, rule upon rule; a word here, and a word there' (but it will be no longer to save this people, but to bring on them their merited punishment); that as they go on their own way they may fall backwards and be broken, and snared and taken captive.

"14. Therefore, hear ye the Word (of Jehovah), ye scoffers, who rule this people of Jerusalem! 15. Because ye say in your hearts, '(We have no fear:) we have made a covenant with Death, and an agreement with the kingdom of the grave [4] (by magic arts; [5] they will not touch us); the overflowing scourge (of war), when it floods the land, shall not reach us, for we have made (with) lying and deceit (a secret treaty with Egypt) for our protection. This lying will be our refuge; under falsehood will we hide.' 16. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Jehovah,

[1] Eichhorn translates this passage spiritedly: "Whom can such men teach wisdom; to whom can they give instruction? Men who talk like children just weaned, like children just taken from the breast. Zav Lazav, Zav Lazav, Kav Lakav, Kav Lakav here and there, half broken words." That is, they could only speak with the broken imperfectness of drunken men. The untranslated words are those of the Hebrew text.

[2] The Assyrian language was "stammering" and barbarous to the Jews. Though closely allied to the Hebrew, it sounded, in comparison, as Low German would to a High German, or Midland English to a Southern Englishman.

[3] The prophets had counselled peace with Assyria, the avoidance of relations with Egypt, and, above all, faithful obedience to Jehovah; but they would not listen.

[4] Sheol.

[5] Magic arts. The ritual of Western Asia depended for its efficacy on the exact performance of every detail. To mispronounce a single word, or to omit to tie a knot at the right moment, invalidated the whole, but if every particular were exactly observed the gods were put in a position of obligation to give what was demanded. Sayce, *Hibbert Lect.*, 319.

'Behold, I am He who has laid a foundation stone[1] in Zion; a tried stone; a precious, deeplaid, corner stone;[2] He who believeth shall not think of fleeing away.[3] 17. But (as a builder uses the line and the plummet, so) I shall use justice for a line and righteousness for a plummet (in dealing with the men of Jerusalem), and the hail (of my judgment) shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the torrents (of My wrath) shall flood out the hiding place (of the scoffers); 18. and your league with Death will be annulled, and your agreement with the grave shall not stand; (your black arts, and spells, and conjurations will be of as little good to you as they were to the men of Samaria). When the overflowing scourge (of the Assyrian armies) shall pass through (the land), ye shall be trodden down by it. 19. As soon as its flood comes it will take you with it. Day after day it will pass through, from morning to night; the Word of Jehovah (at which ye now mock) will then (when uttered in deeds) be an unmingled terror!

"20. For the bed (you have made for yourselves) is too short for one to stretch himself on it, and the covering too narrow to wrap one's self in it. 21. For Jehovah will rise up as (He once did) at Mount Perazim.[4] He will rouse Himself as at the valley of Gibeon,[4] to do His work—a work new and strange to Him (the God of mercy)—and to carry out His task—a task unheard of before.[5]

"22. Now, therefore, be no longer scoffers at my words—thinking to seek help from Egypt and to betray Assyria—lest the bondage in which you now stand, as tributary to the Great King, be made still harder: for there has been revealed to me from Jehovah of Hosts a decree of destruction, not to be recalled, on the whole land.

"23. Give ear, and hear my voice: attend, and hear my speech. (Take a lesson from the tiller of the land as to the moral government of God.) 24. Is the ploughman always ploughing in order to sow? Is

[1] The enormous size and cost of the foundation stones of Eastern buildings is to be remembered. Thus 1 Kings v. 17, "Great stones, costly stones, hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the house."

[2] "The true seed of David, manifest in Jesus Christ." Delitzsch. Cheyne thinks it refers to Jehovah. Hitzig says, "The prophet means that the fabric of the Jewish State will not be held up by the human means of defence on which some trusted, but by the sacred city (as the habitation of Jehovah). The Syrians and Israelites had failed to overthrow it (vii. 1), and so, also, would the Assyrians."

[3] Those who trust in Jehovah will feel that Jerusalem, under His protection, is as secure as is the temple, resting on its immovable foundation stone.

[4] Josh. x. 10, 12. 2 Sam. v. 20, 25. 1 Chron. xiv. 16. See vol. iii. p. 237.

[5] It might be natural to visit the heathen with judgment, but to chastise His own people thus!

he always opening and breaking the clods of the field? 25. When he has levelled the soil does he not scatter the rape seed,[1] and cast abroad the cummin,[2] and sow the wheat in the best spots:[3] the barley in its appointed places, and spelt[4] along the edges of the field? 26. Thus his God rightly instructs him, and gives him knowledge. In like manner must not Jehovah work in due time, and mode? Human affairs are guided by Him according to rules as fixed.

"In His judgments (God acts differently with different classes, as the farmer does in the threshing of his crops. 27. For) the rape seed is not threshed with a threshing sledge;[4] the heavy threshing wheel is not[5] rolled over the cummin; but the rape is beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a flail. 28. Is the precious bread corn trampled to nought on the threshing floor? Nay; the farmer does not keep on threshing it, or drive his threshing wheel, and his horses, over it, for ever. (To do so would be to destroy that which he values most.) 29. This lesson also comes from Jehovah of Hosts, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom."

[1] The word Ketzakh, translated fitches, or vetches, is a kind of rape, grown for oil, and still known by this name in Palestine, and still beaten out in the same way. Some fancy the fennel plant intended, an annual, growing about a foot high, the small black seeds of which are used to flavour bread.

[2] Cummin is a plant somewhat like fennel. Anise, caraway, and coriander belong to the same family. Cummin was, as the text shews, cultivated in ploughed fields by the ancient Jews. Its seeds have a bitterish warm taste, with an aromatic flavour. It was used as a condiment.

[3] Ewald.

[4] Not rye, which is a northern variety of grain unknown in Palestine.

[5] Threshing is performed in the East, in the open air. Oxen, generally, are driven round a ring heaped with the grain, and at once tread out the contents of the ears and break the straw into small soft pieces (teben), which in this form is the principal food of live stock in Palestine and over Western Asia. Threshing sledges, armed underneath with iron teeth or sharp stones, and drawn by cattle or horses, are also sometimes driven round over the grain, the thresher often standing on the sledge to increase its power. One form of this sledge has rollers below—the "cart wheel" of the text.

CHAPTER XV.

THE EGYPTIAN PARTY IN JERUSALEM.

The fall of Samaria had alarmed Jerusalem and strengthened the influential party in it who, contrary to the counsel of the prophets, desired an alliance with Egypt, as a defence against Assyria.[1] Their policy was short-sighted and misleading. The duplicity of Egypt, in withholding promised aid,[2] had led to the ruin of the northern kingdom. But the Nile power was able to delude the populations of Palestine, even after this exposure of its hollow faithlessness. The eyes of many of the Jewish aristocracy still turned to the Pharaoh as the hope of their country in its peril.

The year 720, the second after the fall of Samaria, was hence marked by another great uprising of the nations of Palestine and Southern Syria, instigated by the wily diplomacy of the Egyptian court. Hamath, the Phœnicio-Hittite city on the Orontes, once more revolted, and the flames of rebellion spread south as far as the country of the Philistines. Unfortunately for the success of this renewed struggle for national life, Sargon was free for the time to turn his arms to the west. The tramp of his armies and the roll of his chariots were soon, therefore, again heard in the defiles of Lebanon and in the valley of the Orontes. A bold patriot had seized the throne of Hamath and had induced the crushed but not dispirited populations of Arpad,

[1] Hos. xii. 1. [2] Isa. xxxvi. 6.

Damascus, Samaria, and Palestine generally, to join him; the king of Egypt renewing his promise of aid. But Sargon was too rapid in his movements for the Egyptian prince. Pressing on with a powerful host, he forced Itabihid, the new king of Hamath, to throw himself into the city of Gargar, afterwards known as Aroer, "the place of ruins."[1] There, however, he was besieged and taken prisoner by Sargon; ending his brief dream of royalty sadly, for he was mercilessly flayed alive by his captor. The city having been committed to the flames, terrible punishments were inflicted on the inhabitants. Hamath was stripped of more of its leading citizens, and 4,300 Assyrians left in their place as colonists; the district being put under an Assyrian governor.[2]

It is a striking proof of the historical trustworthiness of the biblical records, that the Great King, who had already crushed Samaria, and for seventeen years after its fall was the terror of all the nations of Western Asia, was known at all, till recently, only by a single mention of his name by Isaiah of Jerusalem.[3] Except for this, his existence had remained unknown for centuries, till recovered from the inscriptions and memorials dug from the mounds of their own ruin, under which all that remained of his once magnificent halls lay buried. Even so late as 1872, the best scholars were ignorant of his ever having lived.[4] Yet his huge palace at Khorsabad, near Nineveh, with the town surrounding it, retained his name in the East, till after the Arab conquest, for an old Arab geographer speaks of Khorsa-

[1] Gesenius, *Thes.*

[2] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 94. Schrader, in Riehm, gives 714 as the date of the campaign, but this does not agree with his march towards Egypt in 720.

[3] Isa. xx. 1.

[4] Knobel and Diestel know nothing of him in their *Iesaia* (1872), p. 196

had as adjoining the ancient ruined city of Sargon'—Dur Surrakim. His campaigns were ascribed to Shalmaneser, or to his own son Sennacherib, or his grandson Esar-haddon; the mention of his name by Isaiah being the only trace left to the world at large of such a man ever having existed.

Sabako, or So, the Egypto-Ethiopian, still uneasy on his newly acquired throne on the Nile, where, as we have seen, he virtually founded the Ethiopian dynasty, had kept as far as he could from committing himself to foreign wars. Hoshea of Israel had sent him presents of the olive oil so famous in Samaria, to win his favour. But he had enough to do to crush out what remained of opposition from the former kinglets on the Nile, and, though he took Hoshea's gifts, was in no mood to make any return of assistance. In the end, however, he was forced to take the field against Assyria, in spite of his disinclination to meet such a foe. Sargon could not forget that the rebels of Syria, Samaria, and other parts had been encouraged by promises of support from Egypt, and so, as soon as he could after the fall of Samaria, he marched his legions south, to chastise Sabako, and crush the local kings of Palestine who had revolted. Egypt had now the choice between allowing Sargon to invade Egypt or meeting his advance beyond his border, where he would have the assistance of the rebels of Southern Palestine. The Assyrian monarch, therefore, as soon as he had crushed opposition in Babylonia, swept on to the south, punishing the remaining population of the northern kingdom, and invading Judah, which, under Hezekiah, prudently followed the counsel of Isaiah, and kept as neutral as possible. By this time Egypt had roused itself to action and marched to the support of Hanun, king of Gaza, one of the

[1] *Asiatic Soc.*, tom. xii. 419, v. 2.

Palestine league, as far as Raphia, twenty miles south of Gaza,[1] near the coast, on the road to Pelusium. Here, however, the joint Philistine and Egyptian armies were defeated in a decisive battle in the year B.C. 720. Raphia itself was forthwith burned to the ground ; Gaza taken, and its king carried off to Assyria, with many of his people.[2]

Anything like open interference in the politics of Western Asia, on the part of Egypt, was for the time at an end. Among the chiefs whom Tiglath-pileser II. mentions as paying him tribute, is Merodach Baladan, whose tribe, the Kaldi or Chaldæans, lived near the Persian Gulf, in the lower swampy regions of the Euphrates.

Tiglath-pileser, under the local name of Pul, had himself reigned two years over Babylon, and Ilulaus, for five years, doubtless as an under-king for Assyria, when Merodach Baladan was able to seize the throne. This was about the year B.C. 722, when Sargon was closing triumphantly the siege of Samaria. Next year, however, the Assyrians marched against the new Babylonian king, who in his eyes was a rebel, for Babylon was regarded as a province of the Assyrian empire. Merodach Baladan hastily allied himself with the king of Elam, but the two were utterly defeated, after which, Sargon, having wasted the country wherever he could, withdrew. Merodach Baladan, on this, once more seized the throne and ruled the country with great ability for a number of years. Sargon was too busy to trouble him; his march to Raphia and Gaza being followed by other campaigns in widely separate regions. From 729 Judæa was not again menaced by the near approach of Assyrian armies till 711, though their garrisons remained in the principal conquered towns. Affairs in the east demanded Sargon's

[1] Kiepert's *Map*.

[2] Smith's *Assyria*, p. 95.

undivided attention. The Hittite empire, which had at one time stretched from Asia Minor to the Euphrates, had already been weakened by repeated defeats. In B.C. 717 Carchemish, the modern Jerablus, on the Euphrates, the capital of this once great state, fell before the Assyrian, and its people were in part sent off to other regions; its name, "The Stronghold of Chemosh," no longer protecting it. For ages its position at the junction of the Euphrates with the Chaboras, or Khabour, where the great crossing-place was from east to west, had given it strength and importance, but it was henceforth ruined, and the dominion of the Hittite race finally annihilated by such a blow following the destruction of Hamath, and Kadesh, its northern centre in Syria. George Smith has the merit of rediscovering the site of Carchemish; Conder has that of fixing the site of Kadesh, on the Orontes.

It is represented in an Egyptian picture as a walled town, surrounded by a river, when besieged by Rameses II. A name—Kades—found still clinging to the site of an important town, about five miles south of the Lake Horon, shewed where the ancient city had been. The river washes it on the east, and a tributary flows on the west, and falls into the river just beyond on the north. Former travellers had noted the name as still retained in the locality, but failed to examine the particular spot. The Hittites were Turanian, or Mongolian, and it is curious to find that there is still a considerable Mongolian population in the plains around. Their Central Asiatic origin is shewn by their wearing the pig-tail characteristic of the Tartars and introduced by them into China, the head being shaven excepting this one long growth; their boots with turned-up points, like those of Central Asia, or, rather, like those found

in some parts of Asia Minor ; their wicker shields, yellow complexion, and beardless faces, and also by the peculiar high head-dress of the women.

But though Carchemish had fallen, other foes were astir. An empire held together only by force had no coherency, and was permanently, in one part or other, in revolt.

Victory still, however, followed the standards of Sargon. Nation after nation in the east was triumphantly subdued, and great deportations of their inhabitants made fresh insurrection more difficult. Syria and Phœnicia received large numbers of colonists from the campaign of 719 ; and in 715, fresh bands of prisoners from various countries were added to the foreign population of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes.[1] Far and wide the Great King saw his glory extending. Among other distant regions invaded by his armies was Northern Arabia. A year before this invasion had begun, Isaiah had startled the crowds of Jerusalem by predicting its occurrence and its result, and his prophetic words, then delivered, have happily been preserved.[2]

Arab tribes of the south had frequently given trouble after the conquest of Samaria, invading its territory at their pleasure, and carrying off slaves and booty, to the terror, doubtless, of Judah ; if indeed it, also, did not suffer. In the year 716, however, Sargon tells us, he sent an expedition into their distant retreats, and "subdued the uncultivated places of the remote Arabia, which had never before given tribute to Assyria," "bringing into subjection, among others, the Thamudites," still a well-known Arab tribe, which roamed anciently in the central districts of Arabia Petrea.[3] The fame of this striking campaign re-echoed in all lands and impelled distant princes to do

[1] Schrader, p. 318. [2] Isa. xxi. 13–17. [3] Ptol., *Geograph.*, vi. 7.

homage to a monarch whose power was so far-reaching and resistless. To secure the friendship of the Great King[1] even the Pharaoh humbled himself to buy peace by paying tribute.[2] The seal of a treaty concluded between Egypt and Assyria about this time has been found in the archives of Kouyunjik, one of the divisions of ancient Nineveh,[3] though Lenormant thinks it proved by the fragments of the seal, to have been a treaty between Sabako and Hanun of Gath, before the battle of Raphia. From the king of the Sabæans in the south of Arabia, and from the "Queen of the Arabians," the locality of whose dominions is not accurately known, tribute was sent humbly to Nineveh—that of the Arabs consisting of gold, spices,[4] horses, and camels. A number of Arab prisoners, also, were brought to the district of Samaria, forming thenceforward a permanent element in its population.[5]

The prediction opens abruptly, thus :

"Ye shall seek shelter by night in the scraggy bush of the Arabian hills, not in the stations on the route, O ye caravans of Dedanites.[6] Bring forth water to the thirsty fugitives, ye inhabitants of the land of Tema—dwelling between Palmyra and Petra—meet the escaped with the bread of welcome. For they have fled before the drawn sword, and the bent bow, and the fury of war! For thus hath Jehovah of Hosts said to me : In a year[7] more, as the years of a hireling, all the glory of Kedar[8] shall be gone, and the remnant of the mighty archers of the Kedarenes shall be small. Jehovah the God of Israel hath spoken it."[9]

[1] Menant, p. 182.
[2] Schrader, p. 318. Maspero, p. 300.
[3] Birch, p. 165.
[4] Or, perfumes.
[5] Neh. ii. 19 ; iv. 7. The campaigns of 711-709 were to shew this prediction terribly fulfilled.
[6] Close to Edom. Knobel, *Völkertafel*, p. 267.
[7] *L'Histoire Ancienne*, p. 355.
[8] A general name in this place for the wandering tribes of Arabia.
[9] Isa. xxi. 13-17.

It was not, however, till the year 711 B.C. that Sargon had stamped out the rebellion of his eastern provinces and crushed such other kingdoms as his lust of conquest induced him to attack. Burning cities, slaying, carrying off captives and plunder, on an imperial scale, at last made him supreme. He had desolated wide regions and called it peace.

But the long respite from war had given Syria and Palestine time to recover themselves, and the national spirit was not yet extinct. Nor was Egypt willing to resign its independence, or to continue tributary to Sargon. Her ancient fame was still a power among the nations of Palestine, and she once more used it to stir up a wide revolt against Assyria. A league of the Philistines, Moab, Edom, and other kingdoms was formed, on which Hezekiah seems to have looked favourably. Egypt undertook to assist the confederates, though she never really did so, but on the contrary was base enough to deliver up to Sargon one of the leaders of the war, who, after the Assyrians had conquered, had fled to the Nile. As in the past, they were "leaning on the stalk of a bruised papyrus reed,"[1] when they trusted the princes of the Nile valley.

The years immediately before 711, when Sargon at last burst on the plotters, must have been busy with these plottings and preparations. Intense excitement must have prevailed through all the subject races of Palestine. In Jerusalem the most vigorous measures of defence were taken. The city walls were everywhere strengthened; towers were raised on them, and they were provided with warlike machines.[2] "The Mountain Castle," or Hill of Zion, was cut

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 21.

[2] The words "raised it to the towers," 2 Chron. xxxii. 5, may mean either or both these preparations; I have included the two.

off by a ditch,[1] and the rock scarped to hinder escalade, the scarped faces of the limestone still remaining visible in the rock near Bishop Gobat's College, where I have seen them. The houses near the walls were pulled down, to prevent their giving shelter to an enemy. A census of the population was also taken,[2] to ascertain the force available in case of extremity, and arms of all kinds were provided in abundance. Jerusalem, since David's time, had extended chiefly to the east and north-east.[3] Jotham had begun a wall, afterwards completed by Manasseh, enclosing the southern spur of the temple hill known as Ophel, and the springs which supplied the city with water. Hezekiah now determined to close up their natural outlet, so as to prevent their being used by an enemy, and brought the stream within the walls by a conduit running westward from Gihon to a new pool,[4] which still conveys water to the Pool of Siloam, and is connected by a rock-cut shaft with the ancient wall of Ophel.[5] An older reservoir, a little south of Siloam, was also utilized;[6] this being the *lower*, as the other was the *upper* pool[7] of the sacred narrative. The energy which could thus "dig the hard rock with iron, and make pools for waters"[8] boded well for the future, and spoke loudly for the vigour of the king.

The inscription on the tunnel which carries the waters of the Virgin's Fountain to the Pool of Siloam, thought by some to date from the age of Solomon, has been more generally ascribed to Hezekiah. The one spring at Jerusalem, that known to Christians as the Fountain of the Virgin, and to Mohammedans as the "Mother of Steps," from the stairs

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, VII. iii. 1. Isa. xxii. 11.
[2] Isa. xxii. 8–11.
[3] Conder, p. 338.
[4] 2 Kings xx. 20.
[5] 2 Chron. xxxii. 4, 30. Ecclus. xlviii. 17.
[6] Isa. xxii. 11. [7] Isa. xxii. 6; xxxvi. 2. [8] Ecclus. xlviii. 17.

leading down to it, through the rubbish of many centuries, forms a small pool cut in the rock, and, as I myself saw, supplies at this time at once a bath for the poor and the water supply and washing place for their linen, for the neighbourhood.

From the back of the excavation a passage cut through the rock scarcely large enough, here and there, for a grown man to squeeze through, runs south under Ophel hill for about the third of a mile, to the ancient rock-cut Pool of Siloam, winding as it goes, and expanding, as it nears Siloam, to a considerable height. In autumn the waters of the spring rush down this channel about twice in the week ; in winter, sometimes twice a day, a natural subterranean siphon, at its rise in the hills, being the cause of the flow and of its cessation. When the bowl of the fountain underground is quite full of water, and the pressure of the air is thus destroyed over it, the pressure from beyond forces out all the water till the bowl is dry. The length of this tunnel is fifteen hundred and fifty feet, and its height varies from sixteen feet to even less than three. There is, however, a second tunnel, much straighter and apparently of older date, which runs chiefly in the same direction, its opening being in some parts six feet high or even more, and two feet across at the top, though at the bottom it is only from eight to fifteen inches across. The famous inscription which I have already given was found in the first tunnel, and was written in characters as ancient in form as those of the Moabite stone, which dates from the time of Ahab. Unfortunately, the greed of some one has quite recently cut out this venerable memorial, which was broken in its removal, but the fragments have since, I believe, been recovered.

But even an Oriental ruler has limits to his power.

Shebna, the prefect of the palace,[1] perhaps a foreigner, and apparently a man of low origin—as his father's name is not stated—had risen to inordinate authority, which he used with overbearing tyranny and pride.[2] He had built a great tomb for himself within the city,[3] as if he were of royal blood, and his chariots and state were the wonder of the inhabitants.[4] He was one of the prominent leaders of the aristocratic party who opposed Isaiah and his fellow-prophets: a representative, and, as far as he dared, a patron of the old heathen party.[5] He was devoted, moreover, to the policy of an Egyptian alliance, which the prophets denounced and the king seems to have disliked. He and his supporters were on many grounds the object of Isaiah's stern antipathy. They had retained their gold and silver idols and their pillars of Astarte, in their gardens, in spite of Hezekiah.[6] They clamoured for a refusal of the Assyrian tribute, fancying it could be done safely by the help of Egypt. If they could not get troops thence, they hoped for chariots and horses. Meanwhile, they defied the prophets, and drove them by threats and harshness to seek safety in concealment.[7] Before leaders and princes of the people, thus powerful and corrupt,[8] the loftiest courage and self-sacrificing devotion alone could make a stand.

There were, in fact, three parties in Jerusalem: that of Shebna, which advocated alliance with Egypt and hostility to Assyria; but, though the greatest difficulty in the way of Isaiah, it finally perished after the retreat of Tirhakah from

[1] Isa. xxii. 15.

[2] His successor was to be very different from him, and was thus to earn the name of a "father" of the people.

[3] Isa. xxii. 16.

[4] Isa. xxii. 18.

[5] See the name "Servant of Jehovah," given to Eliakim in contrast to him. Isa. xxii. 20

[6] Isa. i. 29; ii. 8; x. 10; xxxi. 7. Mic. v. 12, 13.

[7] Isa. xxx. 10, 20.

[8] Mic. iii. 8.

Eltekeh, a proof that could not be overcome, of Egypt being only a "bruised reed to lean upon." The second party was that dating from the time of Ahaz, which urged that Judah should become a vassal of Assyria and save itself thus. The third was represented by Isaiah, and rejected all heathen alliances, trusting to God's declaration that He would defend the city, and that "in quietness and in confidence" should be their strength, and this policy was at last accepted by the rulers of Jerusalem when events had proved its wisdom and sufficiency. Any mixing up in the wars and intrigues of either Egypt, Assyria, or other heathen nations was seen to be wrong, for the State, and henceforth shunned, at least for the time.

But Isaiah was equal to the occasion. He feared no man's face when he had a message to deliver to his fellow-citizens, from God. Shebna and the princes might threaten; the people might be hostile: his voice rose calm above all opposition, witnessing for his convictions and urging his inspired commission. Making his way to the presence of Shebna himself, he denounced him to his face.

"XXII. 15. Hear what Jehovah says to thee,"[1] he broke out, with fierce abruptness, before the astonished vizier. 16. "What right have you here, and whom do you hope to bury here (in this holy city), that you have hewn out for yourself, in the hill-side, a stately sepulchre (as if you and your family were royal), a sepulchre hewn in the top of the mount (as if you would hereafter look proudly down on the city at your feet)? (What have you to do here, that you have) quarried out an everlasting habitation in the rocks?

"17. Behold, Jehovah will hurl thee violently away (O man!) 18. He will surely seize you and roll you up like a ball, and hurl you, as from a sling, into a wide land. There you shall die, and thither your splendid chariots shall be carried off: thou shame of thy lord's house! 19. I will drive you from your station, and pull you down from your high place, says Jehovah!

[1] Isa. xxii. 15-25.

"20. And it shall come to pass in that day that I (Jehovah) will call my servant Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, 21. and clothe him with your robe (of office), and put on him your (official) girdle, and commit your authority into his hand, and he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem (which you have not been), and to the House of Judah. 22. And I will lay on his shoulder the (official) key of the House of David, which you have borne—the key of the palace. What he opens or permits, no man shall shut or forbid,[1] and what he shuts, no man shall open (for his authority shall be supreme). 23. (And he shall not be cast out like you, but) I will establish him (in his office) as a man drives a peg into a sure place. The dignity of his father's house shall have its glorious seat in him. 24. On him shall rest all its honour; its humbler and higher branches will hang on him, as the small vessel, the costly goblet and the mean flagon hang from the sure pin.

"25. In that day, says Jehovah of Hosts, shall you (who hitherto have been) a peg driven into a sure place, be removed, cut down and fall, and those that depended on you shall come to the ground, for Jehovah has said it."

How long an interval elapsed before Shebna's disgrace is not told, but the prophet's words were soon verified, for we next find Shebna in the lower office of king's scribe.[2] At what time he was carried to Assyria is unknown, but doubtless this part of the prophecy was literally fulfilled as well as the other.

Meanwhile Isaiah strained every nerve to prevent secret negotiations with Egypt from being carried out. If earnest inspired eloquence could have saved his country from such a calamity, his must have done so. One oration delivered at this period, and strikingly vindicated by the Egyptian campaign of Esarhaddon, the grandson of Sargon, has happily been preserved.[3]

"XIX. 1. Behold, Jehovah rideth on a swift cloud, and comes to Egypt, and the no-gods of Egypt tremble before Him: [4] the heart of

[1] See Lightfoot, on Matt. xvi. 19.
[2] Isa. xxxvi. 3, 22; xxxvii. 2.
[3] Isa. xix.
[4] Exod. xii. 12.

Egypt melts in its bosom. 2. And I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians; brother shall fight against brother; neighbour against neighbour; city against city, and kingdom against kingdom.[1] 3. And the heart of Egypt will die within her; and I will bring to nought her wisdom, so that they shall (have to) turn (themselves) to their no-gods, and to the muttering sorcerers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the magicians. 4. And I shall give up Egypt into the hands of a hard master,[2] and a fierce king shall reign over it, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts.

"5. And the waters shall fail from the Nile,[3] and the river dry up and be empty: 6. the branches of the river shall become corrupt, and the canals be emptied and dry. The reed and the flag shall wither. 7. The papyrus beds on the Nile edge, and at its canal mouths, and everything sown beside the river, shall wither, and vanish, and be no more. 8. Then shall the fishermen lament, and all who cast hook into the Nile grieve, and they that spread nets on the face of the streams pine for want. 9. They that work the fine combed flax, and those that weave white cotton cloths shall grow pale: 10. the rich of the land shall be ruined; the lower classes troubled in heart.

"11. The princes of Zoan[4] are fools: the sage counsellors[5] of the Pharaoh give unwise counsel! How can ye each say to the Pharaoh, 'I am a son of the wise; a descendant of ancient kings'?[6] 12. (If so,) where is their wisdom now? Let them tell thee (O Pharaoh), and

[1] Brugsch gives a list from the memorial stone of Piankhi, the first successful invader of Egypt from the south, of twenty petty kings and satraps among whom Egypt was at this time divided. He adds, "The great kingdom of Egypt was split up into little dependent states, which leant now on Ethiopia, now on Assyria, as each foreign master gained preponderance for the time." *Hist.*, vol. ii. p. 229. These kinglets and satraps, crushed for the time by So, or Sabako, and his successors, were constantly on the outlook to revolt and raise civil war. This, as the prophet says, they hereafter succeeded in doing, to the final ruin of the land.

[2] An allusion to the conquest by Esarhaddon in 672. He divided the country into twenty small tributary states. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 135. *Assurbanipal*, pp. 15, 16.

[3] In the civil disturbances great misery was caused by the neglect of the dykes and the consequent failure of irrigation. Herod., ii. 137. The text is the essential meaning of the verse.

[4] Zoan was the seat of a local dynasty, under the Ethiopian kings. These monarchs did not put down the petty kings whom they had found in the country, but ruled as lords paramount. Lenormant, vol. ii. p. 350. The utter desolation of the whole district, for ages past - though it was formerly so luxuriantly fertile—strikes every one who visits the Delta. The view from the railway, at almost any point between Cairo and Ismailia, is over a barren desert, thanks to the failure of irrigation.

[5] The council of priests. See vol. ii. pp. 24, 158.

[6] The priests claimed royal descent.

make thee know what Jehovah of Hosts has purposed respecting Egypt!

"13. The princes of Tanis-Zoan are befooled! the princes of Noph[1] are deceived! the priests, who are the corner-stone of the castes of Egypt, have led it astray. 14. Jehovah has put into the heart of Egypt a spirit of folly, so that they lead it astray in all it does, as a drunken man staggers to and fro in his vomit, 15. and neither head nor tail, palm branch nor rush—the high nor the low of Egypt—have power to do anything.

"16. In that day the Egyptians shall be like women, and shall tremble and be terrified at the shaking of the arm of Jehovah of Hosts when He swings it over them. 17. And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt: at the mention of its name, Egypt will tremble at the fate which Jehovah of Hosts hangs over it."

The prophet turns suddenly, at this point, to a subject so different, though still connected with Egypt, that it seems as if one fragment of a discourse had closed, and another, referring to something quite distinct—the winning by the Hebrews of a footing for Jehovah-worship on the Nile—had been joined without having any closer connection with what precedes than the reference of both to Egypt.

"18. In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan, and make their vows to Jehovah of Hosts: one shall be called Ir ha heres—the city of the destroyed idols[2] 19. In that day there shall be an altar to Jehovah in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a Matzaibah (marking a sanctuary) on its border, to Jehovah. 20. And it shall be for a sign and a witness to Jehovah of Hosts in Egypt—that when they cry to Jehovah because of their oppressors, He will send a helper and champion to deliver them. 21.

[1] Memphis.

[2] Herzfeld, *Gesch.*, vol. iii. p. 446. Five cities means a small part. Hebrew was the sacred language, consecrated to the worship of Jehovah. The Egyptian Jews ultimately became so numerous that the Bible was translated into Greek for them. Long before Christ, Egypt had many synagogues. Ir ha heres is a play on the name Ir ha Kheres = the city of the Sun (Heliopolis or On). Jeremiah (xliii. 13) similarly plays on the word when he says that Nebuchadnezzar "shall break the images of Beth Shemesh (the house of the Sun-god), that is in the land of Egypt." Ezekiel changes the name On, by altering the vowel, into "Aven," "nothingness," and foretells that the young men of "Aven" shall fall by the sword. Ezek. xxx. 17.

And Jehovah shall make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall own Jehovah in that day, and shall present offerings and gifts, and make vows to Jehovah and perform them.

"22. Thus Jehovah will smite Egypt; smiting and healing; when they return to Jehovah He will be favourable to them and will heal them."

In those days, Assyria, the rival of Egypt, shall be so no longer. Peace will reign between them, and Judah will be admitted into alliance with them; the three making a strong and happy confederacy. I need not say that in this Isaiah's fond expectations were very far from being realized, for neither Egypt nor Assyria turned to Jehovah-worship, and the hostility of the one to the other continued till the destruction of Nineveh.

"23. In that day there shall be an open highway for peaceful intercourse, from Egypt to Assyria; the Assyrians will come to Egypt; the Egyptians shall go to Assyria; and both Egyptians and Assyrians shall do homage to Jehovah. 24. In that day Israel shall be third with Egypt and Assyria (in this brotherhood of peace); and (instead of an object of angry contention between them) will be a blessing in the midst of the earth (as the instrument of their reconciliation and of the diffusion of true religion).

"25. Thus Jehovah of Hosts shall bless them, saying, Blessed be Egypt, My people, Assyria, the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

The revolt which had been so long threatened in Palestine, broke out at last in the year B.C. 712–711. Sargon was still busy with his eastern wars, and Palestine had been undisturbed by him since the battle of Raphia, in B.C. 720. The Philistines, stirred to vain confidence by their nearness to Egypt, seem to have been at the head of the rising, but they had effected a confederacy with Moab, Edom, and other local kingdoms, while Hezekiah, though secretly friendly, stood neutral. But the splendid energy of the

Great King crushed the "rebels" before they had time to carry out any of their plans of joint action. Unable, himself, to come to the west, he sent a corps of his army thither, under a Tartan or general-in-chief, who marched with the swiftness peculiar to the Assyrian forces, through the broad valley of Baalbek to the sea-coast, above the modern Beirout, and thence, along the narrow hill road overhanging the sea, to the level ground of the plain of Sharon, and thence, on to Ashdod, the centre of the revolt. Its name, "the Strong," indicates a very different place from the poor village which now represents it, a place of a very few stone houses, the majority being mud bricks, enclosed, in small yards, with mud walls, the whole covering the slopes of a low mound, beneath which the old Ashdod lies in its shroud of earth. Lying on the military road between Egypt and Syria, it was important from the earliest times, especially as it was, also, on the great caravan line, north and south. There were, no doubt, stout walls and fortified gates round it when Sargon's field-marshal sat down before it, on the undulating open stretches from which it rises softly. But resistance was useless. "Azuri, king of Ashdod," says Sargon, in his annals,[1] "made up his mind not to be obedient to (the god) Asshur, and not to pay his tribute any longer. He sent to the kings, his neighbours,[2] messengers hostile to Assyria. Then I meditated vengeance and replaced him by another in the rule of his lands. I elevated his brother, Akhimit, to the royalty in his stead. But the people of Syria inclined to revolt, and were tired of the government of Akhimit, and raised Yavan, a Greek, to the throne (probably through the influence of Hezekiah),

[1] *Records of the Past*, vol. vii. pp. 26, 40. Menant, *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 169.

[2] Hezekiah, doubtless, among others.

though, like his predecessor, not its legitimate master. In the fury of my heart I did not divide my army, and I did not diminish the ranks, but I marched against Ashdod with my chariots and horsemen, my warriors and my baggage, and the united host followed steadily in the footmarks of my sandals. I besieged and took Ashdod and Girut Ashdodim. I took the gods who inhabited these towns, with the gold, the silver, and the whole contents of Yavan's palace. I then rebuilt these towns (which had been burnt down), and settled in them people whom my arm had conquered (bringing them from other parts, to take the place of the inhabitants who had been carried off). I put over them my lieutenant as governor. I treated them as Assyrians, and they have since obeyed me." In another place he adds that "Yavan left his wife, his sons, his daughters, and fled through the lands of the midday sun, to Meroë.[1] . . . Then the king of Meroë was overwhelmed by the immense fear of Asshur, my lord, and bound Yavan's hands and feet with iron chains and sent (him), by envoys, to my presence in Assyria." So that instead of aid and friendship, the poor wretch found only treachery from his Egypto-Ethiopian host and ally. Thus Ashdod was razed to the ground, its people carried off, and its king sent to Assyria.

No help had come from Egypt, the selfish fomenter of the rebellion, and the resistance to Assyria at once collapsed. Sargon appears to have marched from Philistia into Judah to crush any plot of the Egyptian faction in Jerusalem, and thus came in contact with Hezekiah. It must have been at this time that he "subdued the wide land of Judah," as he

[1] Oppert says "Libya." Lenormant says that the part indicated was a petty kingdom of the Egyptian Delta. *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 356. Sabako, or So, who had deceived Hoshea of Samaria, and fought with Assyria at Raphia, died in 706, a year before Sargon. Lenormant, vol. ii. p. 356. Sayce reads "Meroë."

boasts, in one of his inscriptions, though unfortunately no details are given. But the march of Assyrian armies was always marked by the same horrors, and in this case must have fulfilled Isaiah's predictions only too literally. Like his predecessors, Sargon boasts of his cruelty in his campaigns. He tells us that he "treated Hanun, king of Gaza, like a slave," carried off whole populations, burnt cities with fire after sacking them, flayed men alive, killed multitudes beyond number of all classes, and swept like a desolating storm over any country he invaded. The sufferings of Judah must have been indescribable, in the portions affected, though it does not appear as if Jerusalem, itself, had been attacked, for we find its walls untouched when Sennacherib assailed it, and they would assuredly have been thrown down had his father, Sargon, taken the city.

The terror of Sargon's victories at Ashdod and elsewhere was extreme, even in the farthest south. The king of Meroë,[1] he tells us, "had never sent ambassadors to the kings my ancestors, to demand peace and friendship and acknowledge the power of the god Merodach. But the huge fear of my majesty touched him; he recognized the greatness of the god Adar, and turned his steps towards Assyria and prostrated himself before me."[2]

The world was kept in these years in constant excitement by Sargon's military enterprises. Scarcely had Palestine been quieted before a new campaign on the Lower Euphrates filled all mouths with fresh wonders. Merodach Baladan had now reigned at Babylon for twelve years,[3] and had fortified it strongly. This revival of its power was intolerable to Sargon. Pretences for an invasion were easily made. Its

[1] So the word is translated by Oppert and Menant.
[2] Menant, p. 186.
[3] *Inscriptions des Sargonides*, pp. 26, 27. *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 187.

king had "not fulfilled the commands of the great gods and had neglected their worship." He had, moreover, "leagued himself with the king of Elam, on the east side of the mouths of the Tigris; had stirred up the wandering Arabs against Assyria, and prepared for war." But at Sargon's approach Merodach Baladan strengthened his fortresses, and withdrew to the marshy districts near the mouth of the Euphrates, where defence was easiest. He had left the inland towns to the care of his generals, choosing the city of Dur-Alkhar as the spot at which to make a stand. Strengthening it by broad ditches filled from the river, he, here, awaited the enemy. But Sargon once more triumphed, scattering the forces drawn up to oppose him, and making more than 18,000 men prisoners, besides taking all the beasts of burden in the camp. Fleeing still farther south, the remnant of the Chaldæan army took refuge in the inaccessible marshes and reed beds of Ukni. Thither Sargon followed them, as far as possible, hewing down the palm-trees, destroying the gardens, burning every house or mansion, and reducing the whole region to the greatest misery.

Merodach Baladan, however, escaped once more, this time to the mountains of Elam, beyond the Tigris, to await better times, leaving Babylon to fall into the hands of the enemy, against whom he was powerless. Passing the interval till the next fighting season, in its palaces, Sargon then found himself once more confronted by his fearless opponent, who now had made the city of Dur-Yakin, in the marshy south, his central stronghold. But fortune still went against the hero. He had surrounded the town with a huge moat into which he turned a stream from the river. The whole surface of the ground, moreover, was broken up by a net-work of canals, to impede the movements of the

invaders. "His banners," says Sargon, "floated like birds along the banks of these streams." He could not, however, stand against the Assyrian attack. "The waters of the canals bore away in their course the bodies of the rebels, thick as the leaves of trees." The Arab tribes in Merodach Baladan's army fled, and he himself retired into the city, leaving behind, in the camp, his golden throne, his royal umbrella, his golden sceptre, his silver chariot, and the splendid furniture of his tent. But the town itself presently fell; its ramparts were destroyed; its houses burned and left a heap of ruins. The queen, and the royal family, were taken "as slaves," with all they possessed, and the palace sacked. But the life of the king was spared, and his wife and family, as we may suppose, restored to him, though he was not allowed to retain his kingdom; an Assyrian viceroy being installed in his place. Thus passed the spring and summer of the year 709, closing by Sargon's re-entering Babylon in triumph. "There," says he, "I betook myself to the temples of Bel, the judge of the gods. With exulting heart and joyful countenance I grasped the hands of the great lord, Merodach, the august god."[1] Sargon was now, finally, king of Babylon as well as of Assyria.

After the defeat of Merodach Baladan in 710, Sargon remained for a time in Babylon. Great sacrifices to the gods; the reception of envoys from many kings, bearing their tribute; the planning and digging new canals of irrigation, to add to the glory of the city,[2] and much else, occupied him for some months, but he had to hurry off to fresh campaigns against Media and Elam. A splendid palace at Dur

[1] *Annales des Rois d'Assyrie*, p. 189. Lenormant has a striking essay on Merodach Baladan in his *Premières Civilisations*, vol. ii. p. 202 ff., under the title of *Un Patriote Babylonien du VIIIe Siècle avant notre ère.*

[2] Menant, *Annales*, p. 173.

Sargina, now Khorsabad, near Nineveh, was meanwhile being built under his directions, as a quiet and magnificent retreat for his declining years. His pride in its grandeur is seen in the lengthened accounts, given in the annals, of the precious woods used in its construction; its furniture of gold, silver, copper, and costly stones; the sculptured lions and bulls at the gates; and the lines of alabaster slabs engraved with the story of his deeds, that adorned the walls of its countless rooms.[1]

But the avenger was at hand. He who had laid kingdoms waste was to be called to his account. The mighty palace was dedicated in 706, and in 705 Sargon lay on its floor, murdered.

Sennacherib,[2] a younger son of the conqueror, presently occupied the vacant throne. Inferior in political ability to his father, he was not less ambitious, and spent his life in military expeditions on the grandest scale. Renowned over the earth in his days as the great destroyer,[3] he knew no higher policy than force. Bringing only misery to the nations he conquered, they broke into constant revolt, as opportunity offered. Lust of power, cruelty, pride, and arrogance, the attributes of Oriental despots as a class, were developed in excess in his case.[4] All that is said by Isaiah, in his magnificent fourteenth chapter, of the king of Babylon, might be applied to Sennacherib. The splendour of the palace at Kouyunjik, by which he sought to eclipse that of his father at Khorsabad, its magnificent halls and entrances, its vast extent, occupying a quarter of Nineveh,[5]

[1] Menant, pp. 178-9.

[2] Sin (the Moon-god) richly blesses the brothers. Schrader.

[3] Layard's *Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 118.

[4] Smith's *History of Assyria*, p. 126.

[5] Layard, pp. 138, 147. Rawlinson, *Anc. Monarchies*, vol. ii. pp. 428, 466. Menant, p. 229. *Records of the Past*, vol. i. pp. 54, ff.

are attested alike by his own boastful inscriptions, and by its far-stretching ruins. Under him Assyria reached almost its highest glory.

The excitement that followed the murder of Sargon, as the news spread from land to land, created a wide harvest of troubles for the new king. Merodach Baladan at once drove away the Assyrian viceroy, on Sargon's death, and Sennacherib had to spend his first year[1] in a campaign against Babylon, which, in alliance with Elam, resisted him. Once more, however, the patriot Chaldæan was defeated and had to flee, and Sennacherib entered his capital in triumph. A royal favourite, who had been brought up, as the inscription tell us, "like a little dog in the palace"[2] of Sargon, was set over the province, to be overthrown again in a short time by Merodach Baladan, and Sennacherib, after subduing and devastating Chaldæa, returned to Nineveh laden with spoil. Campaigns against Elam and Media occupied the second and third years; but in the fourth he was forced to turn his armies once more to Syria. The long respite which it had enjoyed since Sargon's invasion of 711 was at last at an end.

[1] 705–4.

[2] Schrader, art. "Sanherib," in Riehm. The figure is one of endearment.

CHAPTER XVI.

JUDAH BEFORE SENNACHERIB'S INVASION.

THE departure of the Assyrian army from Judæa had vindicated to the letter the promises of Isaiah, given in the name of God. But the condition of the country after the invasion was sad in the extreme, and, still worse, the moral state of the people proved to have been little benefited by the discipline through which it had passed. It is at this time that we catch the only glimpse of Isaiah's personal environments. "In the year when the Tartan came to Ashdod,"[1] he tells us: "when Sargon the king of Assyria sent him—and he fought against Ashdod and took it, the Lord spake by Isaiah," commanding him to perform a symbolical act; the only one recorded of him. The characteristics of the older prophets had in this respect ceased, and all-powerful words had taken the place of emblematic action. But Isaiah was for once directed to take off the black outer sackcloth mantle of coarse linen, or hair, the robe of mourning, which it seems —like other prophets[2]—he habitually wore, and to remove the sandals from his feet, and go about Jerusalem thus "naked" and barefooted, for three years, as a sign that Egypt and Ethiopia, now united under the Ethiopian dynasty of So, or Sabako, should be utterly humbled within

[1] Isa. xx. 1, ff.

[2] Zech. xiii. 4. John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4. Sheepskin or goatskin coats were worn in some cases. 2 Kings i. 8; Heb. xi. 37.

that time. Egyptians and Ethiopians, young men and old, the army of the united kingdoms, sent to aid the rebellion of the Palestine nations, were to be led off captive by the Great King, similarly stripped and humbled. Nothing less than such a lengthened enforcement of the great lesson of the worthlessness of an Egyptian alliance would impress it on the populations of Judah and Canaan at large. The overthrow of Ashdod and the other revolted provinces must, however, have convinced multitudes that Jehovah, speaking by the prophet, had counselled them with the truest wisdom. "The people of Palestine, Judah, Edom, and Moab, dwelling beside the sea," who "brought tribute and presents to Asshur my lord," says Sargon in one place, "were speaking treason"[1]—but within the time named by Isaiah, their hopes, as we have seen, were crushed, in spite of any trifling help sent from Egypt.

It is to this period, apparently, soon after Sargon's campaign against Ashdod, when Judah, also, was so terribly scorched by the fire-flood of war, that the chapter which now opens the prophecies of Isaiah, must be referred. Patriot as well as seer, he grieves over the desolation of his country by the invaders who had lately swept through it; pleads with his people against the depravity of the times, and strives to rouse them to reformation, by a touching presentation of Jehovah's tenderness, and longing to forgive them and restore them to His favour.

"I. 2. Hear, O heavens," says he,[2] "and give ear, O earth, for Jehovah speaks! 'I have nourished and brought up sons (to manhood and greatness), but they have rebelled against me. 3. The ox knows its owner; the ass its master's crib, but Israel has no knowledge; my people have no understanding.'

"4. Ah, sinful race of guilt-laden men! a generation of evil doers!

[1] Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130. [2] Isa. i. 2.

of unworthy sons! who have forsaken Jehovah, despised the Holy One of Israel, and broken loose from Him!

"5. Why[1] should ye be stricken any more (for continuing your revolt against God)? The whole[2] head is sick and the whole heart faint. 6. From the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no part sound. The body is all wounds and wales and festering sores, that have not been pressed out and cleansed, nor bound up nor softened with oil.

"7. Your land is a desolation; your cities are burned with fire; the foreign soldiery devour (the fruits of) your soil before your eyes; it is a waste such as only barbarians leave. 8. And (Jerusalem) the daughter of Zion (though saved from the foe) is left like a poor shed[3] in a vineyard; like a frail hut in a garden of cucumbers; like a lone watch-tower![4]

"9. Had not Jehovah of Hosts spared a small remnant of us, we should have been (swept away as utterly) as Sodom; we should have perished like Gomorrah!

"10. Hear the word of Jehovah, ye princes of Sodom;[5] give ear to the lesson of our God, ye people of Gomorrah![5]

"11. 'What is the multitude of your sacrifices worth to Me?' says Jehovah. 'I am satiated with the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. I have no pleasure in the blood of bullocks, or lambs, or he-goats. 12. When ye appear before Me trampling on the forecourts of My temple, who desires these sacrifices of beasts at your hands?

"'13. Bring no more worthless meat offerings: their smoke is an abominable incense to Me. As to your new moon services, and your sabbaths, and celebration of festivals—iniquity and solemn assemblies in one—I cannot endure them. 14. My soul hates your new moons and feasts, they are a burden to Me: I am weary of bearing them. 15. When you spread forth your hands (in prayer), I will hide My eyes from you; pray ever so much, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood!

"'16. Wash you, make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your

[1] Knobel, Diestel, Ewald, and the Vulgate have: "On what part."

[2] Delitzsch, Naegelsbach, Cheyne, have, "every."

[3] In which the watchman sat while his crop was ripening, to protect it from birds, etc. Its loose boards and branches would speedily be the very image of ruin, when he had left it, after the vintage was gathered. The hut in the garden is a similar figure.

[4] Ges., *Thes.* Hitzig. Knobel. Diestel.

[5] Jerusalem.

deeds from before My eyes. Cease to do evil. 17. Learn to do well. Seek what is right. Restrain the oppressor. Do justice to the orphan. Plead the cause of the widow.

"'18. Come, now, and let us settle our dispute together,' says Jehovah. 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be like wool.

"'19. If ye willingly obey Me, ye shall eat the good of the land; 20. but if ye resist and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword.' Thus has the mouth of Jehovah spoken.

"21. How has the (once) faithful city become a harlot; she that was full of justice: in whom righteousness was counted to have its dwelling, but now murderers! 22. Your silver has turned to dross! your wine is thinned with water. 23. Your law-makers are law-breakers, and comrades of thieves; every one of them loves a bribe, and hunts after gifts. They keep back justice from the orphan, and the cause of the widow does not come before them!

"24. Therefore, says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, the Mighty One of Israel: 'Ha! I will wreak My desire on My adversaries, and avenge Myself on My enemies, 25. and turn My hand against you, smelting out your dross as with lye,[1] and I will take away all the alloy from the silver. 26. Then I will make your judges as they were of old, and your counsellors as in early times, and, after I have done so, men will call you the City of Righteousness, the Faithful City.

"27. Zion shall be saved through justice, and her reformed sons through righteousness. 28. But rebels and sinners shall all be destroyed, and they that forsake Jehovah shall be consumed! 29. For ye will be ashamed of the terebinth groves you loved, where ye worshipped idols. Ye shall blush for the shady gardens you loved, where you (wrought lewdness in your foul rites). 30. (And on the day of God's judgments) ye shall be like terebinths with blasted leaves, and as a waterless garden. 31. The rich man shall be as tow, and his idol as a spark. They will both burn together and no one will quench them!"

Whether the grand orations, of which this is one, were delivered, like our sermons, at stated times—perhaps the Sabbaths or feast days—or as occasion rose, cannot be known. But the lofty enthusiasm they reveal could hardly have been restricted to periodical outbursts. In his long

[1] An alkaline flux to make the metal melt sooner. Winer, art. "Langensalz." Borax is the flux commonly used in England.

coarse black mantle of sackcloth, with his feet bare, he must have been a familiar figure to every one in the narrow streets of the little city which was the centre of his activity. It may have been in these days of sadness, when Sargon's campaigns were spreading desolation far and near, that some utterances preserved to us respecting Edom were uttered.

One striking fragment is ominously prefaced by the words: "The burden of the land devoted to silent desolation."[1] It begins abruptly, as follows:

"XXI. 11. A voice," continues the prophet, "calls to me out of Seir—Watchman, what (watch) of the night is it? (and, in its eager anxiety, repeats the cry), Watchman, what (watch) of the night is it? Is darkness soon to pass and joy return?"

But the watchman prophet replies:

"12. The morning (indeed) comes, but so (alas!) does the night (light and darkness are both in store for you). If you wish to inquire further (from me), do so; come back to me (when you desire)."

Perhaps the exact future of Edom had not as yet been revealed to the seer.

At a later time he could speak more fully, and did so; treating Edom as the representative of the collective enemies of the kingdom of God, and prefacing its doom by a picture of the wrath of the Almighty on the world at large, when its sins shall have filled their measure.[2]

"XXXIV. 1. Draw near," said he,[3] "ye nations, to listen, and ye peoples, hearken! Let the whole earth give ear, and all that it contains—the world and all its populations.[4]

"2. For the indignation of Jehovah is kindled against all the (heathen) nations; His wrath against all their armies. He has laid

[1] This is the meaning given in Riehm to "Dumah." Isa. xxi. 11, 12. The Assyrian name for Edom is Udumu.

[2] Matt. xxiv. 29. Isa. lxv. 17; lxvi. 22.

[3] Isa. xxxiv. 1–17.

[4] Literally, "that springs from it."

them under His ban: He has devoted them to slaughter! 3. Their slain shall be cast out (unburied): the stench of their corpses will fill the air,[1] and the mountains will be washed away with their blood! 4. And all the army of heaven—(the stars)—shall also die and rot away, and the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll;[2] their whole hosts (of stars) shall fall down from them, as a (withered) leaf falls from the vine, or the (autumn) leaves from the fig-tree!"

The awful prophetic vision of the final judgment of God on his enemies, now singles out the doom of Edom.

"5. For My sword (here in heaven) has already been bathed in (the) blood (of My enemies here on earth): (behold), it shall now light (in judgment) on Idumea, the people I have doomed! 6. The sword of Jehovah will drip[3] with blood; it is heavy with fat—with the blood of lambs and he-goats,[4] with the fat of the kidneys of rams;[4] for Jehovah has a sacrifice in Bozrah;[5] a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. 7. The (huge) wild bulls[6] shall be struck down along with the lambs and goats—the bullocks with the steers.[6] Their land will be soaked with their blood, and its dust manured with their fat.

"8. For Jehovah will have a day of vengeance and a year of retribution for the wrongs[7] of Zion. 9. The mountain torrents of Edom shall be turned into pitch;[8] its very dust into brimstone; its soil to burning pitch. 10. It shall not be quenched day nor night; its smoke

[1] Literally, "go up."

[2] A scroll—the written book of antiquity, which, as we have seen, was fixed at each end to a round piece of wood, and closed by rolling these together, towards the centre.

[3] Literally, "is full of." The arrows of God are said, Deut. xxxii. 42, to be "drunk with blood," and the sword to have a mouth. Gen. xxxiv. 26. Exod. xvii. 13. Jer. xxi. 7. See also Virg., *Æneid*, xi. 804.

[4] The people at large.

[5] The present El Buseirah, containing about fifty huts or tents of Arabs, pitched amidst the ruins of a very large ancient town. It lies about twenty miles south-east of the foot of the Dead Sea, among the mountains of Edom, and was once the capital of the country. Amos i. 12. Isa. lxiii. 1. Jer. xlix. 13, 22. Bozrah means "The strong place." See art. by Prof. Mühlau, in Riehm.

[6] The great men of the land. The "wild bull" is literally the rimu or aurochs of the Assyrian inscriptions. The Hebrew word is reim; plur., reniim. Houghton, in *Trans. Soc. Bib. Arch.*, vol. v. p. 368.

[7] Literally, "quarrel," "cause."

[8] Volcanic agencies are implied by such a figure. Sodom and Gomorrah lie near, and extinct craters with streams of ancient lava are close by. Ritter, vol. xiv. p. 1045; vol. xv. p. 769. Sulphur springs are also met with. The mountains of Edom are vast masses of lava, with layers of sandstone which extend at their base.

shall ascend for ever. It shall be waste from generation to generation. None shall pass through it for ever and ever.[1] 11. But the pelican and the bittern[2] shall take possession of it; the eagle-owl[3] and the raven will dwell in it, and God shall stretch out over it the (measuring) line of confusion, and the plummet[4] of desolation.[5] 12. No nobles will be there who may claim the kingdom; all her princes shall be no more. 13. And thorns shall spring up in its palaces; nettles and thistles in its castles; it shall be a habitation of jackals; a pasture for ostriches. 14. And the howling wild creatures of the wastes shall meet the howling wolf, and the demon shall call to his fellow, and the night-demon[6] have her resting place there. 15. The arrow-snake shall make its nest there, and lay her eggs, and hatch them, and gather her young under her shadow; there, also, shall the vultures assemble, one to another.

"16. Seek ye out from the Book of Jehovah, and read. Not one of these creatures shall be wanting; none of them shall lack its fellow. For the mouth of Jehovah has commanded: His Spirit has gathered them. 17. He has thrown the lot for them, which part each shall inhabit, and His hand has divided it to them with the measuring line. They shall possess it for ever; they shall dwell in it from generation to generation!"

[1] This passage must be taken as a highly wrought expression of utter desolation and solitude. There are not any active volcanoes in Edom, and even in Bozrah, as we have seen in Note 5, p. 410, there is still a village of Arabs.

[2] The Septuagint, and, after it, most translators, render this "hedge-hog;" but this creature never frequents marshy places such as the pelican chooses, while the bittern does. In Riehm it is supposed that the "springing snake," which leaps from trees, is intended. It is a small reptile, perhaps the one meant by flying serpent. Tristram is in favour of "bittern."

[3] Tristram, p. 192.

[4] Diestel, literally "stones" used as plummets.

[5] The two words are the same as in Gen. i. 2, Tohu and Bohu.

[6] The word is "Lilith." It corresponds to the Assyrian "Lilit," the name of female demons who were fancied to kill children and even adults. The "satyrs" may be the "Lil"—the male of these imaginary beings. Lenormant, *La Magie*, pp. 30-36. (See p. 296.)

[7] The utter desolation of Edom in contrast to its ancient glory and wide population has excited the wonder of all travellers. Dean Stanley speaks of these as hard to realize from the present aspect of the country. (*Sinai and Palestine*, p. 28.) The ruined cities of Edom, says he, on the mountains east of the Arabah, and the remains and history of Edom itself, indicate a traffic and population which now seem to us almost inconceivable. "Edom, once given to Esau," says Stephens (*Incidents of Travel*, vol. ii. p. 34), "as being of the fatness of the earth, but now a barren waste, a picture of death, an eternal monument of the wrath of God, and a fearful witness to the truth of the words spoken by His prophets, lay before me. The great caravan routes which ran through it in the days of David and Solomon, and under the Roman

The mountains of Edom are chiefly a kind of porphyry, but the valleys are extremely fertile, in contrast to the barrenness of the hollows, and the eastern uplands are rich with pasture-land and corn-fields; but it is almost utterly neglected, for fear of the Bedouin. The approach to Petra is by a pass, fourteen hundred feet high, the mountain itself being four thousand feet above sea level, but Petra lies still higher in a limestone region, four thousand seven hundred feet above the sea. The entrance to the city is through a narrow passage between high perpendicular cliffs of the richest colours. An arch, high overhead, once carried an aqueduct, useless for ages. A clear brook dimples at your

empire, are now completely broken up, and the great hadj routes to Mecca and Damascus lie along its borders, barely touching and not passing through it." (Stephens, vol. ii. p. 35.) Petra was formerly the centre to which all the trade of Arabia converged, and Edom was wealthy by the profits thus realized, as well as by its sheep, etc., and the abundant fertility of its then well-irrigated but now waterless soil. "Edom," says Burckhardt, "may with great propriety be called a stony desert, though susceptible of culture. In many places it is overgrown with wild herbs, but it must have been once thickly inhabited, for traces of many towns and villages are met with, . . . as well as many springs." (*Travels*, p. 436.) "The country," says Dr. Olin, "is blighted with cheerless desolation and hopeless sterility. The hillsides and mountains, once covered with earth, and clothed with vineyards, are now bare rocks." (Olin's *Travels*, vol. ii. pp. 15, 55.) Of the palaces of Petra, Lord Claud Hamilton writes: "The ground is strewn with portions of the roof, hewn stones, and portions of the cornice, amongst which numbers of *thistles*, *prickly plants*, *and nettles* grow. The common English blackthorn and bramble are very common in Petra, and a plant more prickly than either the ordinary stinging nettle. The place, in fact, is full of brooms, thistles, nettles, and thorns." "I was often reminded," says Dr. Olin, "of the prediction of Isaiah, in the thirty-fourth chapter of his prophecies, by the multitude and noise of the wild fowls, each answering his mate." Scorpions abound, every stone seeming to hide them, and snakes are numerous. "The creeping things which are found in the ruins of Petra," says Dr. Wilson, "are so numerous, that the place, like all others, I suppose, of a similar character in the country, may be characteristically spoken of as 'an habitation for dragons.'" (*Lands of the Bible*, vol. i. p. 329.) "Among the birds which we noticed," he continues, "are the eagle, the kite, the hawk, the great owl, the small owl, the raven, etc." (*Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 237.) "I observed also," he adds, "some white vultures, which were generally seen in pairs, soaring above the valley or perched on the rock." The wild goat and wild boar, the hedgehog and porcupine, the fox, wolf, jackal, hyæna, lynx, leopard, hare, etc., are more or less common in Edom. The word "satyr" may mean goat—and if so, herds of goats further illustrate the prophecy. They are often met. Thus wonderfully have Isaiah's predictions been verified.

side, and the whole path is filled with oleanders, while the cliffs are hung with luxuriant creepers. As the passage opens you stand amidst a succession of tombs and temples hewn, often with perfect taste, in the face of the richly tinted rocks. Dwellings, cisterns, and all that makes up a city, line the ravine as it expands. The whole scene is a dream of novelty and beauty, never to be forgotten. And yet this rock-hewn city has perished!

While Isaiah was thus stirring up Jerusalem to a nobler course than dependence on Egypt against Assyria, by urging it to trust simply to the protection of Jehovah, while faithful to its engagements to Assyria, as its vassal and tributary, and while he was eagerly proclaiming the judgments imminent at the hands of the Great King, on those local powers which had revolted from him, the excitement caused by Sargon's campaign against Ashdod began to fade, and the old intrigues and corruption daily gathered renewed life. In 709 the Assyrian had regained possession of Babylon, and Merodach Baladan had to give way to an Assyrian viceroy. But his spirit, or possibly that of a son, still survived, and once more, either before Sargon's murder in 705 or immediately after it, Babylon was in the hands of the redoubtable Chaldæan.

Meanwhile Jerusalem had a new and special trouble. Its admirable king, Hezekiah, who was still in the prime of his life, and as yet had no heir to succeed him, was seized with a grave illness. A carbuncle, or other inflammatory swelling,[1] brought on perhaps by the mental anxiety he had lately suffered, seemed likely to prove fatal. It was soon known in Jerusalem that Isaiah had been summoned to the

[1] 2 Kings xx. 1, ff. Isa. xxxviii. 1, ff. Dr. Mead supposes it was a fever followed by an abscess.

royal sick-chamber to tell the sufferer, by his prophetic foresight, what would be the result, and that he had announced to him from Jehovah that he must set his house in order and prepare for death. Universal consternation prevailed; nor was the grief of others more acute than that of Hezekiah himself. Clinging to life, and almost despairing of his country; uncheered moreover by the fulness of that hope of immortality which we enjoy in the New Testament,[1] he turned his face from the light of day, which he was so soon to leave, to the blank wall, and "wept sore." That he had no heir to the throne, to reign after him, must have deepened his grief.[2] He had just passed through great trouble and had seemed about to enjoy a lengthened "rest," but, instead of this, the grave was opening before him. His tender nature shrank from the prospect, and he passionately appealed to God that he might yet be spared. "Remember now, O Jehovah," cried he, amidst his sobs, "how I have walked before Thee in truth, and with my whole heart, and have done what was good in Thy sight." Nor was his prayer unheard. The faithful Isaiah had scarcely left the sick-bed before the gloomy announcement just made was withdrawn. Before he reached the gate of the Middle Town, to go down to the Lower City,[3] he was directed to return and tell the king that his prayer was answered; that he would in three days be able to return thanks personally in the temple for his recovery; that fifteen years would be added to his life; and that, when the Assyrians, hereafter, should come again to seize Jerusalem, it would be divinely delivered. Simple means, blessed by God, were sufficient. The usual Eastern remedy of a poultice of figs, which is

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10.

[2] Jos., *Ant.*, X. ii. 1.

[3] Delitzsch.

still used for the same purpose in Turkey and Persia,[1] was laid on the tumour and gave instant relief. To cheer the sick man, a sign or divine pledge of his complete recovery was also vouchsafed. Ahaz had built a lofty sun-dial, in the Babylonian fashion, at once, perhaps, to serve in the worship of Baal and to measure time. It may have been a lofty structure, on the ascending steps of which the shadow of the sun fell, in regular advance; or it may have been a horizontal disk on which minute steps or degrees were marked.[2] In either case the shadow was to go back ten of these grades. How this was brought about by God we are not told, but it is striking to find that a partial eclipse of the sun, visible at Jerusalem, took place on September 26, 713, and that it would produce exactly such a phenomenon as Scripture records;[3] while another happened on the 11th January, 689. But, unfortunately, the one seems too early and the other too late to suit the date of the king's illness. Yet, it is curious to read that these eclipses would have the effect of causing a shadow from the south, cast on a staircase, to recede to the extent described in the history, even ten steps, and that with a deliberate motion not to be mistaken, extending over twenty minutes. But it is not necessary to fall back on natural phenomena where a special miracle is recorded; and, indeed, the fact that it was not a miracle, but an ordinary event, would have destroyed its value as a sign.

To this illness of Hezekiah we are indebted for an interesting fragment of the literature of the time, throwing a striking light on the prevailing religious ideas. A psalm

[1] Morier. Harmer's *Observ.*, vol. i. p. 389. Gesenius, *Iesaia*, p. 979. The Greeks and Romans also used figs in this way. Celsius, ii. 373. [2] Thenius.
[3] Thenius. Mr. Bosanquet in *Trans. of Bib. Arch.*, vol. iii. p. 36.

composed by the king, and doubtless sung with the accompaniment of the pipes and harps of the Levites, on his appearance in the temple to render public thanksgiving to God for his recovery, has come down to us.

"XXXVIII. 10. I said," it begins,[1] "In the quiet of my days (when my troubles are just over, and while my sun is still at midday [2]), I must enter the gates of the grave. I am made to come short, by divine wrath, of the due remainder of my years. 11. I said—I shall no longer see Jehovah—no longer see Him in the land of the living! I shall no more look upon men, when I descend among the dwellers in the silent land.[3]

"12. The tent of my body is plucked up and borne from me, like the tent of a (wandering) shepherd (when his encampment removes). My life is rolled up as a weaver rolls together his web. Jehovah is about to cut it off, as a rolled-up web is cut off from the loom.[4] To-day, or at latest before another morning, Thou wilt make an end of me! 13. When night came, I wore through it in pain, till the light, crying, 'I shall die before morning'—for it seemed, in my agony, as if Jehovah were breaking all my bones, as the lion crushes the bones of his prey. 14. Like a swallow or a crane so did I keep chattering: I moaned like a dove: with eyes dim with tears I kept looking to heaven, as I cried, 'O Jehovah, I am sore pressed (death comes on me like a stern creditor who must be paid): Lord, satisfy him for me (and spare my life!)'

"15. What shall I say? How shall I thank God, for He has not only promised (through His prophet) to restore me, but has fulfilled the promise! I shall walk humbly all my remaining years after this in the bitterness of my soul! 16. O Lord, by such lowly remembrance of Thy goodness do men's spirits live: thus alone comes the true life of the soul. (Since Thou seest that I feel this) Thou wilt perfectly restore me, and let me live.

"17. Behold, I suffered very bitterly, but God has turned it to good, for Thou hast in love delivered my soul from the nothingness of the grave. Thou didst cast all my sins behind Thy back, (so that, not seeing them, Thou couldst save me from death, their desert).

[1] Isa. xxxviii. 10, ff.
[2] He was about 40. I embody different renderings.
[3] Literally, "of ceasing."
[4] Literally, "warp."

"18. For the grave [1] cannot praise Thee; death cannot give Thee thanks. They that are gone into the pit cannot hope for (a proof of) Thy goodness (such as I have received). 19. The living, the living, he (only) can praise Thee, as I do this day! Henceforth, I will make known to my children the faithfulness God has shewn to their father.

"20. Jehovah, indeed, is still ready to save me in days to come: therefore I and mine will sing psalms of thanksgiving all the days of our life, to the music of harps, in the house of Jehovah."

The news of Hezekiah's illness and wonderful recovery speedily reached even distant countries, and, among others, Babylonia. There, Merodach Baladan—"the son given by the god Merodach" [2]—or his son, of the same name, was once more king, and was casting about him in all directions, for allies who might, at least, divide the attention of the Great King, at Nineveh, and thus make his position easier. The confusion always following a change of monarchs in empires like that of Nineveh, seems to have roused him to special earnestness, in anticipation of an early invasion from the young sultan, Sennacherib, as soon as he had seated himself firmly on the throne. Clutching, in his despair, at any hope, it seemed possible that Hezekiah, who had already given Sargon some trouble, might be disposed to form an alliance with Babylon, and thus in some measure weaken the strength of the great enemy. An embassy was therefore sent to Jerusalem [3] with an autograph letter from Merodach Baladan, and the usual costly gifts with which Eastern monarchs always approach each other. The pretended object of the mission was to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery, but its real design was to form a treaty offensive and defensive with him. Such an honour to the king of a small country like Judah must have been very flattering, and

[1] Sheol. [2] Schrader. Mühlau
[3] In 705–704. 2 Kings xx. 12, ff. Isa. xxxix. 1, ff.

was acknowledged by Hezekiah with every circumstance of Oriental courtesy. The strangers were shewn all the sights of the kingdom, including, among others, the royal magazines, arsenal, and treasury. The whole military and fiscal arrangements of Judah, in fact, were opened to their inspection, as if to let them know that its support was worth their king's seeking.

To the simple and incautious Hezekiah such a disclosure of his secret resources before the ambassadors of a prince whose reign had been a constant and unsuccessful struggle against Assyria was impolitic in the extreme, for Judah was its vassal. Isaiah, his faithful counsellor, at once saw the terrible mistake of his master. The sudden rise and fall of Oriental empires was often startling. Their provinces were always ready to throw off the yoke imposed on them only by resistless violence. The reign of each sultan, indeed, was mainly spent in putting down revolts, from Media to Tyre, from Armenia to Arabia. Merodach Baladan's tenacity in resistance shewed a vitality in his claims which might hereafter reverse the relations between him and Nineveh. Above all, prophetic insight corroborated natural prescience. It had been revealed to the seer that Babylon would one day be supreme, and that Judah would then suffer for the vanity of Hezekiah, by utter ruin. Ever fearless in his duties as the servant of God, this could not be withheld, though Hezekiah was at once his friend and his king. Once more the black mantle of the prophet was seen in the private chamber of the palace, and the monarch had to listen while his reprover told him, that he was sent from Jehovah to foretell the future destruction of the kingdom, by that very power whose representatives had thus received the royal confidence. The palace would be plundered; the

national wealth seized ; and his own descendants carried off to be servants in the palace of the king of Babylon. The blow was heavy, but it fell on a heart duly humble. "Good is the word of Jehovah," replied the king, "which thou hast spoken"—an answer followed by the mitigating assurance that the catastrophe would not happen in his own days. Yet, though thus contrite, he had not the firmness to break away at once, and openly, from the alliance with Babylon that had been proposed to him, and thus roused the furious indignation of Sennacherib.

It is to this mission from Babylon that we owe perhaps the grandest chapters of the great prophet. Nineveh was the one mighty power in Western Asia. Vast regions trembled under its gigantic shadow. For nearly a century to come it was to be the mistress of the world, for it only fell, before the Medes and Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar, between the years B.C. 609 and 606,[1] while the ruin of Babylon itself by the arms of Cyrus did not take place till the year B.C. 538. But what no man could have predicted was revealed to Isaiah.[2]

"XIII. 2. Raise high a signal flag on a bare hill," cried he in one of his orations,[3] "(lift it up, to guide the enemy to an attack on

[1] Schrader in Riehm, art. "Nineve" and "Nebucadnezar."

[2] I am aware of the theory of some scholars that the prophecy should be referred to some unknown author of a much later date than Isaiah. But the grounds on which this is proposed seem quite unsatisfactory, and rest, essentially, on a sceptical theory that there is no such a thing in Scripture as prophecy, in the sense of prediction. The criticisms which would invalidate the claim of Isaiah to the authorship of the 13th and 14th chapters of his prophecies, are only such as ingenuity could easily invent with respect to any writing of an ancient author. Nor can the critics agree among themselves in their literary surgery. One is reminded of the heated and often wild controversy respecting Homer, raised by Wolf at the close of last century. For more than a generation the air was full of the dust raised by fierce disputants; but how completely has it now subsided, leaving the great Homeric poems to be regarded as essentially the work of their reputed author, with here and there a doubtful couplet; earlier materials having possibly been utilized in creating the splendid whole.

[3] Isa. xiii.-xiv. 23.

the great city). Cry aloud to them (as they come near); wave your hand (to them in welcome); encourage them to burst through the gates of the Tyrants.[1]

"3. I, Jehovah, have commanded My warriors, consecrated to the battle (by sacrifices): I have summoned My Mighty Ones to execute My anger: My heroes, proudly rejoicing in the battle!"

The prophet now hears the sounds of the gathering hosts.

"4. Hark! A noise in the mountains of Media,[2] as of a great people: hark! the mingled tumult of assembling kingdoms and nations![3] Jehovah of Hosts musters the legions of war! 5. They come from a far country; from the end of the heavens;[4] even Jehovah and the instruments of His indignation, to destroy the whole of Babylonia!

"6. Howl, ye Babylonians! For the day of Jehovah is near. It shall come with destroying violence from El Shaddai—the Almighty! 7. All hands shall hang spiritless at the thought of it; every man's heart shall melt. 8. They shall be dismayed; distress and anguish shall seize them, they shall groan as a woman in her labour; they shall stare one at another; their faces shall glow like flames (with terror).

"9. Behold the day of Jehovah approaches; terrible in its fury and consuming wrath, to devastate the land and root out the sinners from it.[5] 10. For the stars of heaven and its constellations[6] shall hide their light (before the on-rushing storm); the sun shall be darkened at its rising, and the light of the moon, by night, will be shrouded. 11. I will punish the world for its evil; the wicked for their iniquity; and I will put an end to the arrogance of the proud, and abase the haughtiness of the Tyrants. 12. And (so terrible will be the slaugh-

[1] The Medes and Persians were the assailants. The gates of the Tyrants were those of Babylon.

[2] Cyrus attacked Babylonia first from Media.

[3] The Medes, Persians, Armenians, and Chaldæans. Xen., *Cyrop.*, iii. 3. Jer. li. 27.

[4] Media—a very remote, unknown land, to the Jews, a land which seemed to be where the sky touches the earth.

[5] Babylon had held the whole earth in its tyranny. They are, therefore, preeminently "sinners." Others, also, who had offended God would perish in the awful war.

[6] The wandering Arab tribes, to which the Hebrews were allied, had early given names to the constellations which shone over them in the wilderness pastures by night. One was the Ostrich, others, the Camel, the Tent, the Pitcher, and so on. See on this, very fully, Gesenius, *Iesaia*, vol. i. pp. 457, ff.

ter that) I will make men scarcer than fine gold; scarcer than the golden bars of Ophir. 13. I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall move from its place, at the wrath of Jehovah of Hosts, and the day of His burning anger! 14. Then shall they be like the hunted gazelle; like sheep with no one to gather them: the whole multitude of strangers of Babylon, shall flee (like these creatures); each man to his own people, and to his own land. 15. Every one who (has not fled), but is found (still) in Babylon (when it is taken), will be thrust through; every one taken shall fall by the sword. 16. Their infants will be dashed to pieces (against the stones) before their eyes; their houses sacked, and their wives outraged.

"17. Behold, I shall stir up the Medes[1] against Babylon: a (barbarous and cruel) race which sets no value on silver, and has no pleasure in gold. 18. Their bowmen[2] shall strike down the young men: they will have no compassion on the fruit of the womb; their eyes will have no pity even on children.

"19. Thus shall Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the pride and boast of the Chaldæans, be like Sodom and Gomorrah which God overthrew. 20. It shall lie uninhabited for ever; undwelt in from generation to generation. Not even the wandering Arabs shall pitch their tents there, nor shall the shepherd tribes camp in it. 21. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there: the houses shall be full of howling creatures,[3] and ostriches shall dwell there, and the goat-like demons of the wilds will dance there.[4] 22. And wailing beasts shall howl by night in their palaces, and jackals in the pleasant mansions. The time of Babylon is near; her days shall not be prolonged.

"XIV. 1. For Jehovah[5] will have mercy on the exiles of Jacob, and will again choose the banished Israel for Himself (as He did before, in Egypt), and plant them again in their own land. And the alien shall join himself to them, and will attach himself to the House of Jacob (as a proselyte). 2. And they will take some of the Babylonians, and bring them with them to Palestine, and the House of Israel shall hold them, in Jehovah's land, for men slaves and women slaves; and they that were captives shall hold captive their former masters, and shall be lords over their former oppressors.

[1] The Medes, only, are mentioned because they were the chief power till the time of Cyrus; the Persians being subordinate. The "Medes" may be understood as including the various Aryan nations of ancient Irân, or Persia, in its widest sense.

[2] The Medes and Persians were famous as bowmen. The bow was indeed their chief weapon. Herod., vii. 61. Strabo, xi. 525. *Cyrop.*, ii. 1, 7. Jer. l. 42.

[3] Jackals, wolves, hyænas, owls, etc.

[4] See Luke xi. 24. See p. 24.

[5] Isa. xiv.

"3. And it shall come to pass in the day when Jehovah gives thee rest (O Judah) from thy sorrow, from thy distress, and from the hard bondage which they made thee endure, 4. that thou shalt raise this song of triumph over the king of Babylon, and say—

"How has the Oppressor ceased (to oppress)! how is his raging stilled! 5. Jehovah has broken the staff of the wicked, the sceptre of the tyrants, 6. which fiercely, with blow upon blow, smote down the nations, and trampled under foot the peoples, with a rage that never ceased! 7. The whole earth is now at rest and quiet; men break out into singing. 8. Even the very cypresses and cedars of Lebanon rejoice at thy fall. 'Since thou hast been laid low,' say they, 'no feller comes up against us.'[1] 9. The kingdom of the dead, beneath, is in commotion, to meet thee at thy coming. It stirs up the shades for thee; all the (former) mighty ones[2] of the earth. It has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. 10. They all stir themselves and say, 'Art thou also become weak as we; art thou become like us (poor shades)!' 11. Thy pomp is cast down into the kingdom of the dead, and the murmur of thy harps; (instead of thy tapestries and silken pillows) the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee!

"12. How art thou fallen from heaven, thou shining one, Son of the Dawn! how art thou cast down from heaven to earth, who didst lay low the nations! 13. Thou saidst in thy heart, 'I (will be a god and will) mount to heaven; I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit down in the assembly of the gods on their sacred mountain, in the recesses of the north.[3] 14. I will ascend above to the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High!'

[1] The Assyrian inscriptions often mention royal expeditions to hew down cypresses and cedars in Lebanon. In 1805 Seetzen found thousands of cedars still growing on northern Lebanon, and hence there may still be forests known only to the local population, though the cedars now shewn are few in number.

[2] Literally, "he-goats of the earth" the leaders of the flock of men, who go before the people as the leader goes before the flock. Zech. x. 3 Ps. lxviii. 30. Jer. l. 8. An old he-goat always leads the flock of goats, in the East.

[3] Orientals, in antiquity, imagined that the dwelling of the gods was in the extreme north, on a mountain reaching into the sky. This was called Meru by the people of India, and Albordj by the Persians. There was an Olympus—called Rowandiz—on which the Accadians thought of the gods as having their seat. It was usually called "the mountain of the East," but it was north-east, and is hence spoken of as in the north. It is alluded to here by Isaiah. It was sometimes called "the mountain of the world;" the firmament being supposed to move round on its peak as on a pivot. It was only in the earliest ages, however, that the gods were thought to live on it. An old geographical table tells us that "Arallu" was the land or mountain of gold,

"15. Yet, now, thou art brought down to the kingdoms of the dead, to the deepest darkness of the grave! 16. They that see thee, look narrowly and gaze earnestly at thee, saying, 'Is this the man that made the earth tremble, that made kingdoms quake; 17. that made the world a wilderness, destroying its cities (and leading off their populations); who opened not the dungeons of his prisoners!

"'18. All the kings of the nations lie in honour, each in his own tomb. 19. But thou art cast far from thy burial place, like a worthless branch; thy only winding sheet the bodies of those slain around thee in battle, pierced by the sword; (among them thou liest) as a carcass trodden under foot. 20. Thou shalt not be joined (in burial) with thy ancestors who have gone down to the stones of the pit, because thou hast destroyed thy land (by thy tyranny), and slain thy people (by thy constant wars). The seed of evildoers shall for ever be without a name.'[1]

"21. Prepare ye a bath of blood for his sons, for the guilt of their fathers, that they may not rise up and conquer the lands, or fill the circle of the earth with fresh oppressors! 22. For I will rise against them, saith Jehovah of Hosts, and cut off from Babylon all its people: their name and its inheritors: the branch and the twig, saith Jehovah! 23. I will make it the possession of the bittern and swamps of water, and sweep it utterly away with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of Hosts."

Sargon's final triumph over Babylon took place in 709, and a satrap was then appointed over it by him. But it again revolted at Sargon's death, and was destroyed by Sennacherib only in 691. Even then, indeed, Babylonia was not finally subdued, for it was not till the reign of Esarhaddon, Sennacherib's son, that it was really incorporated into the Assyrian empire. But it rose once more as Nineveh reeled to its fall, and, in the end, under Nebuchadnezzar,

a statement which reminds us of the words of Job xxxvii. 22 "Out of the north cometh gold" as well as of the Greek legend of the griffins who guarded the hidden gold in the distant north. A sacred mountain in the far north was indeed a familiar dream of all the nations of Western Asia, and of the Jews amongst others, for we find it introduced more than once in the Hebrew Apocalypse, "The Book of Enoch." Gesenius, vol. ii. p. 316. Lassen, *Indische Alterthumskunde*, vol. i. p. 34 Sayce's *Fresh Light*, p. 40.

[1] End of the song.

took its place as the great power of Western Asia. Centuries of varying fortune passed, but, at last, in our middle ages, it finally sank to that awful desolation which now covers it.

Meanwhile, Isaiah, in his public utterances, frequently alluded to the mission from Merodach Baladan; if only to warn the king and people against any future alliance with heathen powers. Roused by the vision of all that his country would suffer at the hands of Babylon, he poured forth predictions of the ultimate fall of the oppressor, as if in this he might find some consolation. One of these orations, if we may so speak, bears the superscription of the Burden[1] of the Desert of the Sea; the Euphrates being often, like the Nile, spoken of thus; perhaps from its periodical inundation of the vast plains on its sides, which, but for its waters, would be, as indeed they now are, a waste. Babylon, in fact, stood in the desert, though the great river turned as much of the plain as it was made to irrigate, into richly productive soil.

"XXI. 1. As tempests from the south,[2] sweeping along, desolation like a storm comes from the desert, the land of terrors. 2. A gloomy vision is revealed to me! The plunderers spoil, and the wasters lay waste—(wild and fierce enemies are coming up against Babylon!) Go up against her, O Elam; besiege her, O Media![3] The sighing she has caused will I make to cease! 3. The vision (of all that is to happen) fills my loins with pain; the terrors of it have taken hold of me like the sorrows of a woman in labour; my senses fail me; I can neither hear nor see. 4. My heart beats wildly; terror has unmanned me; even the cool evening which I loved is a time of trembling!"

[1] The word "Massa," translated here "burden," means primarily, a "lifting up," as of the voice, and hence should be rendered "prophecy," or "saying." It has a secondary meaning of "bearing," from burdens being "lifted up" before being carried. Hence it is often translated "a burden."

[2] Storms from the south were the most terrible in Babylon. Isa. xxi. 1 10.

[3] Media stretched nearly from the south end of the Caspian Sea to the farther slopes of the great mountain range which extends from Armenia, east of the Tigris, to the Gulf of Oman, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Babylon will be at ease, in fancied security; its nobles feasting and drinking, when the city is stormed.

"5. They are preparing the table; spreading the coverlets on the dining couches; they are eating and drinking. (But while thus carousing the cry bursts in on them:) 'Arise, ye princes, anoint the shield.'[1]

"6. For thus hath Jehovah said to me: 'Go, set a watchman (on the look-out tower). Let him tell you what he sees.'

"7. And he saw troops of horse, in pairs; troops of baggage asses; troops of baggage camels. And he hearkened diligently with much heed (to note their number, their description, and the direction they were taking). 8. Then he cried aloud, like a lion, 'O (my) Lord, I stand on the watch-tower all the day. I keep my place here through the night, 9. and lo, there come troops of horse, in pairs.'[2] Then He answered and said, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, and all the images of her gods are cast, broken, to the ground."[3]

"10. O (my banished children) ye (exiles) threshed and trampled on (by the tyrant) as corn is on the threshing floor—that which I have heard from Jehovah of Hosts, the God of Israel, have I now declared to you."

[1] Shields were greased or oiled before the battle, to make them shine and to toughen the leather.

[2] The Persians were chiefly cavalry.

[3] The Persians abhorred idols.

CHAPTER XVII.

SENNACHERIB'S CAMPAIGN.

Roused by the death of Sargon to a new effort to drive back the Assyrians from their dangerous proximity to Egypt, and to escape the tribute now paid for a number of years, Tirhakah,[1] brother-in-law to Sabako, or So, who had come to the throne of the united kingdoms of Ethiopia and Egypt, after the immediate successor of that Great King, threw himself eagerly into foreign politics.

Hoping at least to repel, outside his own territory, an invasion by Assyria, which his revolt from it was sure to bring down on him, or, possibly, urged by ambition to try whether he could not wrest Palestine from its hand, he determined to take active measures against Sennacherib, the new Assyrian Sultan, whose dominions extended to his own frontiers. Continuing the hereditary policy of the Pharaohs, therefore, he set to work through his envoys to stir up the various nations of Palestine, to yet another revolt against Nineveh, promising to aid them if they rose in arms. The traditions of Egyptian greatness in former times, and of the reign of the Nile kings over all Western Asia, still acted like a spell on the neighbouring populations, and any venture, however

[1] 2 Kings xix. 9. The inscriptions of Sennacherib speak of Tirhakah as the king of Meroë—that is, Ethiopia—in addition to being "the Pharaoh," just as the Austrian emperor is "king of Hungary" as well. There was, however, apparently another Tirhakah, also ruling over Ethiopia and Egypt, in the reign of Assurbanipal, the grandson of Sennacherib. It seems, indeed, to have been a common name with the successive kings of the Ethiopian dynasty. *Keilinschriften*, p. 202.

desperate, seemed justifiable, that promised freedom from the hated oppression of Assyria. The kings of Phœnicia and most of those of the Philistine country, of the Orontes, Ammon, Moab, and Edom, once more formed an alliance, refusing tribute, and prepared to defend themselves, with the aid of Egypt and Tirhakah. Among others, Hezekiah, in spite of the earnest protests of Isaiah, was carried away by the prevailing enthusiasm, and, having joined the confederacy, threw off, like its other members, his allegiance to Sennacherib, and refused to send him any longer his yearly tribute; nor did he stop even here, but ventured to assert the old supremacy of Judah over the Philistine district on the sea plain, carrying off in chains, to Jerusalem, Padi, the king of Ekron, who remained faithful to Assyria, and putting a Jew, Zedekiah, as king in Askelon. Western Asia was all aflame, and the rebellion, if not suppressed, might spread through the empire; for the extinction of the kingdoms of Damascus and Samaria, which were now Assyrian satrapies, seemed a foreshadowing to all other subject nations, of their own approaching fate. The change of monarch on the banks of the Tigris had seemed a favourable time for throwing off the hated yoke. The lands near the Mediterranean had enjoyed peace since Sargon's campaign against Ashdod, and the feeling of renewed vigour, diligently utilized by Merodach Baladan in the East, and by Tirhakah on the Nile, threatened danger to Nineveh and seemed to promise deliverance to its provinces. But Sennacherib had kept himself fully acquainted, through his spies and officials, with these complicated intrigues, and soon shewed himself at once prompt and able in his action respecting them. The treason of Hezekiah, and his relations to both Merodach Baladan and Tirhakah, and that also of the other vassal kings of

Syria and Palestine, were all known to him, and he resolved to strike down on them before they had time to organize their resistance or unite their forces. Palestine, moreover, was to be the first to suffer, as the key to Egypt, the would-be rival of Assyria.

It was not till B.C. 702–701, however, three years after his accession, that Sennacherib with his legions appeared in Philistia. He was furious in his indignation. Not only were the states to be punished which refused tribute, but, in the case of Judah, which was still in a half independent position, and now resented even this degree of submission, there was the special ground of attack, that it was the one fragment of territory between the bounds of Assyria on the one hand and of Egypt on the other, which was not absorbed into the Assyrian dominions. Moreover, the almost impregnable fortress of Jerusalem gave it a strategical importance to a military monarchy. Neither Egypt nor Assyria could keep a firm hold of Palestine north and south, while it remained in the hands of the petty Jewish king. An Assyrian army invading Egypt might be attacked in the rear by it, while an Egyptian army invading Western Asia might find its return home blocked by it. Not only the retention of Palestine, but far wider interests were imperilled, to both Egypt and Assyria, so long as it was independent. It must either be held by the one or the other, or be tributary to one of them, before the state thus neutralizing its position could feel safe. It was, in fact, as regards the two great powers of the day—Assyria and Egypt—like Afghanistan to-day between England and Russia, in Asia. Each state, therefore, in turn threatened or cajoled it, and its leading men leaned now to the one, now to the other. Egypt was near, but it had recently been helpless as an ally, from its divisions. Now, how-

ever, it was under a strong king, and was not only united, but had Ethiopia as part of its empire. Assyria, on the other hand, was advancing with fearful vigour, and threatened to crush all that opposed it as easily in the future as in the past. Tirhakah had intrigued, at this time, to form a league in Palestine against the Great King, with Jerusalem at its head, and it was to break up this, and not only crush all resistance, but make Jerusalem his own henceforth, that Sennacherib now bent his course towards these rebellious districts. He entered the country, as usual, from the north. His long array of chariots, horsemen, and archers threaded the recesses of Lebanon, and scaled its heights. Its majestic cedars and cypresses, to use the language of the prophet, shrieked as they felt the fire at their roots and saw the fall of their companions,[1] levelled by the engineers of the invader to make machines of war, or mighty beams for the palaces of Nineveh. Where water was scarce, countless wells were dug, or those covered over by the enemy reopened.[2] Sennacherib boasted that with the sole of his foot he would dry up all the canals of Egypt, the ultimate object of his invasion. He would also, he declared, pitch his silken tent not only in the high passes of the north, but in Jerusalem itself, and profane its palace gardens, the luxurious retreats of Hezekiah's capital.[3] The mountain torrents were bridged [4] for the passage of his divisions; the rough wadys made practicable for his chariots. Descending by the narrow, wooded gorge, in which the waters of what was anciently called the Wolf River, but now the Dog River, rush down from the mighty

[1] Zech. xi. 1. [2] Winer, vol. i. p. 195.

[3] 2 Kings xix. 23. Thenius. This seems a better rendering than "the highest caravanserai on Lebanon, and the garden woodland of Carmel." Stanley, and others. After crushing Egypt, he would turn against Jerusalem and humble it.

[4] Isa. xxxvii. 24, 25. Septuagint.

slopes of Lebanon, clear as crystal, beneath overhanging rocks, a few miles north of Beirut, and about sixty north of Tyre, he rounded the promontory at its mouth, and turned to the south along the military road, a few yards wide, hewn out in the face of the hills, over the sea. Rameses II. had caused his likeness to be cut on the wall of rock along which this wild track runs, and Sennacherib ordered his own to be put alongside that of his Egyptian predecessor of a thousand years before: both sculptures still remaining to this day, wonderfully fresh in their outlines.

On the first news of the approaching invasion, or perhaps earlier, Hezekiah, yielding for the time to the Egyptian party, had sent ambassadors to Zoan and Hanes, or Heracleopolis, the two capitals of Egypt at this time, and they had from thence sent their gifts on the backs of camels to Meroë, in the far south, deep in the desert sands of the Soudan, the ancestral seat of Tirhakah, which, no doubt, he often visited; the Nile forming an easy route most of the way. Thither the Jewish embassy itself followed, in "vessels of bulrushes," to seek the Pharaoh in his distant southern dominions, "which the rivers divide," while hoping vainly to get help from "a people that should not profit them." During their absence, it would appear, Isaiah, ever earnest in denouncing alliance either with Assyria or Egypt, and urgent that the people of Jehovah should trust in Him alone—delivered the warnings and exhortations now forming the thirtieth and thirty-first and thirty-second chapters of his prophecies.

"XXX. 1. Woe to the rebellious children,[1] saith Jehovah," he bursts out, "who form schemes which are not from Me, and an

[1] Isa. xxx.

alliance [1] contrary to My mind—to heap sin on sin. 2. Who set out to go down to Egypt without having asked at My mouth (if they should do so); to flee to the protection of the Pharaoh, and seek shelter under the shadow of Egypt! 3. Pharaoh's protection shall be your dishonour; the hoped-for shelter under the shadow of Egypt your disgrace. 4. For the princes of Judah have appeared at Zoan; her ambassadors have reached Hanes.[2] 5. But all Judah shall be ashamed of a people who cannot profit them,[3] who are neither a help nor of use, but bring shame and disgrace.

"6. Yet in spite of this My people carry their riches on the shoulders of asses' colts, their treasures on the humps of camels (the gifts by which they hope to secure an alliance), into a land of trouble and distress, from out of whose deserts come the lioness and lion, the viper and flying serpent [4]—to a people who cannot profit them.[5] 7. For (the promise of) Egyptian help is vain and worthless; therefore, I call Egypt 'the Braggart that talks but sits still.'[6]

"8. Now go, write it on a tablet before them, and inscribe it in a roll, for a witness hereafter, for ever! 9. For Judah is a rebellious people, children false (to God their Father), children that will not listen to the teaching of Jehovah. 10. Who say to the seers, '(Ye shall) tell us no visions (such as you have told us, only of coming evil)', and to the prophets, 'Ye shall not tell us the naked truth: speak pleasant things to us, prophesy deceits (that there will be good fortune and prosperity to us, instead of Assyrian oppression). 11. Leave your old ways, turn from your old course, and henceforth let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'[7]

"12. Therefore, thus says the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word of Mine (spoken by My prophets), and trust in perverseness

[1] Delitzsch. [2] Heracleopolis Magna, the seat, like Tanis, of a local dynasty.

[3] Sargon says, "The people and their evil chiefs, to fight against me, unto Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, *a monarch who could not save them*, their presents carried, and besought his alliance." Smith's *Assyrian Canon*, p. 130.

[4] Dr. Tristram fancies the name, "fiery flying serpent," is a poetical expression for the swiftly darting and springing serpents of the desert. *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 278.

[5] The words, "The burden of the beasts of the South," seem an interpolation. Ewald. Diestel. Knobel. Eichhorn translates them, however, "A burden upon beasts making for the south." Delitzsch makes them, "An oracle on the hippopotami of the south."

[6] Rahab is a Hebrew or Hebraized name for Egypt, meaning "boaster," "braggart." They promise but "sit still," that is, do nothing.

[7] Or, "take out of our sight, the Holy One of Israel."

[8] To trust in God, as able to uphold them without help from Egypt.

and crooked ways, and stay yourselves on them—13. this sin will be to you like a rent in a high wall, which thus threatens to come down, and bulges out to its fall; the crash will come suddenly, in a moment; 14. and shiver it as one shivers a clay pitcher, breaking it small, so that, in its wreck, there will not be left a sherd large enough to lift fire from the hearth, or water out of the cistern.[1]

"15. For thus has the Lord, even Jehovah, said, the Holy One of Israel, 'By returning (to Me) and resting (on Me) you shall be saved; in keeping quiet and in confidence (on Me) shall be your strength. 16. But you (would not do this, and) have said, 'No; we will fly to the battle on (eager war) horses (got from Egypt).' Therefore, ye will (indeed) flee, (but it will be before the foe!) Ye have said, 'We will ride swift horses.' Yes! (you will indeed ride off the field on them), chased by swift pursuers. 17. A thousand of you shall flee at the war-cry [2] of one (of the enemy); at the war-cry of five (your whole army) shall flee, till ye be scattered like the solitary flag-pole [3] on the top of a mountain, or a lonely banner [4] on a hill."

But the prophet cannot continue this strain of threatening. His heart yearns over his nation, who are still the people of God, and he proceeds to temper his sternness by gracious promises.

"18. (But when it has come to this, Jehovah will have pity on you.) He will long till He can be gracious to you, and will rise from His

[1] This is an allusion to the custom of breaking worthless pottery into very small fragments, or even to powder, to make "homrah," which, when mixed with lime, forms the cement used universally in Palestine, and the East at large, for coating the sides and bottoms of cisterns, reservoirs, aqueducts, and the like, and making them thoroughly watertight. Men may still be seen every autumn, outside Jerusalem, sitting on the ground crushing a heap of large fragments of pottery into "homrah," which they sell as a regular article of trade. They make it by pushing back and forward over the mass in front of them, a heavy rounded stone, choosing a rocky place on which to lay their heaps for the process. When the whole is thoroughly broken, it is fit for sale—a coarse kind of homrah consisting of pieces about a quarter of an inch square; the finer kind being similar fragments ground to powder. In this state it is used to make the roofs and walls of houses watertight. See Neil, pp. 112–128.

[2] Eichhorn. Knobel. Diestel.

[3] Translated "mast" in Isa. xxxiii. 23. Ezek. xxvii. 5.

[4] Translated "pole," Num. xxi. 8, 9. Elsewhere, "ensign" or "banner." Flags were raised on hills to give warning of an invasion or as a rallying point for fugitives. Isa. v. 26; xi. 12; xviii. 3; lxii. 10. Jer. iv. 6, 21. Ps. lx. 4. Delitzsch renders "beacon" by "pine-tree."

throne [1] to have mercy on you. For Jehovah is a God of righteousness: happy are all they that hope patiently for Him!"

Judah cannot be suffered to perish before its enemies. Moreover, it will turn from its sins, under the pressure of its troubles, and then shall come glorious days!

"19. Thou people dwelling in Zion and Jerusalem—Ye shall weep no more (as ye did when the foe came up against you)! Jehovah will assuredly be gracious to you when you cry to Him for help; as soon as He hears He will answer you! 20. (Even when you are most pressed in the siege) He will give you bread, though in short measure, and water, though little, and your teachers, the prophets, will not need to hide themselves any longer (from the hatred of the great), but your eyes shall look on them. 21. And (as often as you stray either to the right hand or the left) your ears shall hear words behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk ye in it.' 22. And you will strip off (as no longer holy) the silver overlaid on some of your graven images, and the coating of gold on others; you shall cast away the images themselves,[2] as you do what is loathsome; you will say to them, 'Out, from this.'

"23. Then will God give rain for the seed with which you sow the ground, and rich and nourishing bread from the increase of your fields. Your cattle, in that day, will feed in wide pastures. 24. And the oxen and young asses that till the ground will eat mixed provender,[3] seasoned with salt, winnowed with the shovel and the basket.[4] 25. And on all the lofty heights, and on every high hill shall be running streams and flowing waters—in the day of the great slaughter (of the foes of Jehovah, whether the Assyrian or the scornful in Jerusalem), when the towers in which they trusted fall. 26. And the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold—as the light of seven days[5]—in the day when Jehovah binds up the wounds of His people, and heals the bruises of His stroke."

[1] Diestel. [2] The images were of wood, overlaid with silver or gold.

[3] A mixture of barley or oats with vetches and beans, all sown and reaped together. Pliny, *H. N.*, xviii. 15, 41.

[4] Cleaned after threshing, by being thrown up against the wind from a shovel or a basket. The straw broken small by the feet of the oxen in threshing, as already noticed, is the usual food of cattle in Palestine; but clean grain will be given them in these happy times. See pp. 361, 372.

[5] Even nature shall be glorified in the triumph of the Messianic times. See Rom. viii. 19 ff.

But now, once again, the prophet sees before him the judgments impending on Assyria, which are contrasted with the joy of Israel, redeemed by Jehovah from its hand.

"27. Behold, the name of Jehovah comes from afar. His anger burns: His approach is terrible;[1] His lips full of indignation; His tongue like devouring fire: 28. His breath as an overflowing flood, reaching even to the neck: to winnow the nations with the sieve of destruction, and to put a bridle, turning them astray, in the jaws of the nations!

"29. But ye shall sing, then, as in the eve of the Passover feast,[2] and ye shall have gladness of heart as when one travels on to the sound of flutes, going up to the mount of Jehovah, the Rock of Israel![3]

"30. Jehovah will make the majesty of His voice[4] to be heard (the thunder shall be as it were His cry of war, when He comes on against the foe): He will shew the lighting down of His arm, to destroy him in the fury of His indignation, amidst the bursting of storm clouds and a tempest of rain and hail.[5] 31. For at the thunder of Jehovah shall Asshur tremble, when he is struck down by the rod of the Almighty. 32. And at every blow of the avenging rod, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, will Judah sound aloud its timbrels and harps (its deliverance drawing nigh). With stroke on stroke of His swinging mace will Jehovah fight against the enemy. 33. Already is a Tophet prepared: (for the burning of the corpse[6] of) the (Assyrian king) is it made ready. Jehovah has made the pile high and broad;

[1] Delitzsch and Cheyne translate this, "in thick uplifting of smoke." Diestel and Ewald are in effect as in the text. The image is that of a storm coming along the heavens from afar.

[2] Gesenius. Songs of praise and thanks were sung then, followed by the Great Hallel—Psalms cxiii.–cxviii.

[3] Ps. cxxii. 1–4.

[4] "The voice of God" is the thunder. Ps. xxix.

[5] A prediction suitable to the destruction of Sennacherib's army, though the agency is here described in the grand imagery of poetry.

[6] Among the Hebrews only the bodies of criminals were burned. Lev. xx. 14; xxi. 9. Josh. vii. 25. Winer, art. "Begraben." A place in the valley of Hinnom, on the south side of Jerusalem, where human beings were burned in the Canaanitish period, and where in the days of Ahaz and at other times they burned children to Moloch, was called Tophet—a place to be spat upon, or abhorred. The bodies of many Assyrian dignitaries were probably burnt by the Jews after Sennacherib's flight. Jer. vii. 31; xix. 13. 2 Kings xxiii. 10. 2 Chron. xxviii. 3.

fire and wood are in abundance; the breath of Jehovah, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it."

But the Egyptian faction were too strong and determined to be easily turned aside. Isaiah, therefore, returned to the attack on them, again and again.

"XXXI. 1. Woe,"[1] says he, in another oration, delivered doubtless to excited throngs, and perhaps before the leaders of the faction themselves—"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, and put their trust in (the) horses (of Pharaoh), and their confidence in (his) chariots, because they are many, and in (his) horsemen, because they are valiant,[2] but never look to the Holy One of Israel, nor seek after Jehovah!

"2. Yet He also is Wise—(wiser than they)—and will bring evil to pass (instead of good—evil which their wisdom cannot avert)—and will not take back His words (once spoken). He will arise against the party of the wicked—(the great men of Jerusalem who oppose His prophets)—and against their (Egyptian) allies who help them to do evil.

"3. (Nor can they resist Him!) For the Egyptians are men, and not God, and their horses flesh and not spirit. (Therefore) when Jehovah stretches out His hand (in wrath), the helper will stumble, and he that is helped will fall; they will perish together."

Jehovah will put the Assyrian to flight without the help of Egypt, and will Himself protect Jerusalem.

"4. For thus has Jehovah spoken to me. As when the lion and the young lion growl over their prey, he who calls out a crowd of shepherds against them is not afraid of their cries or dismayed by their roaring—so Jehovah of Hosts will descend, to fight for Mount Zion and her hill. 5. As birds hovering (over their nests protect their young), so will Jehovah defend Jerusalem. He will hover over it and protect it; He will pass over it[3] and deliver it.

"6. Turn ye then, O children of Israel, to Him from whom ye have so foully revolted! 7. For in that day (the day of your sore need) every man will cast away his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, the

[1] Isa. xxxi.

[2] The mountainous Judah had few horses or chariots; the level Egypt had many.

[3] Like the angel on the night of the Passover.

sinful things which your own hands have made. 8. And Asshur shall fall by the sword, not of man (but of God); the sword not of a mortal (but of the Eternal), shall devour him. He shall flee before the sword and his young men shall be made slaves.[1] 9. And (the fugitive Assyrian leader) shall pass by his strongholds, for fear (not seeking a refuge in them in his flight), for his princes will be afraid of the (Jewish) ensign floating from them, saith Jehovah, whose home-fire is in Zion and His hearth in Jerusalem."

Such thoughts naturally raised in the mind of the prophet the thought of the happy times of the future, so dear to his heart. He therefore continues:

"XXXII. 1. Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness,[2] and princes rule justly[3] (in those days when the idols shall be cast away and the tyranny of the Assyrian destroyed). 2. And A Man[4]—that is, the king, and indeed, all the princes as well—shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as streams of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary, (sun-scorched) land![5] 3. And the eyes of those who see will no longer be dim (as now), and the ears of them that hear shall hearken attentively. 4. And the heart of the thoughtless will have wise understanding, and the stammering tongue will be clear and flowing.[6] 5. The ungodly man shall no more be called honourable, nor the knave be greeted as worthy. 6. For the ungodly man speaks ungodliness; his heart works iniquity, to practise evil and utter error concerning Jehovah, and make empty the soul of the hungry, and take away the drink of the thirsty. 7. As to the knave, the means he uses and the plans he designs are evil. He devises wicked schemes to destroy the poor with lying words, even when he speaks that which is true. 8. But the noble soul deviseth noble things and stands fast to them."

[1] Prisoners of war were thus treated in antiquity. They were set to "task service" in the field, in herding cattle, in building, and otherwise. Josh. ix. 21. 1 Kings ix. 21. Deut. xx. 11.

[2] Isa. xxxii.

[3] Cheyne thinks that the prophet may have had the hope that Hezekiah would distinguish himself thus, and that it is probable there was a great religious revival after the deliverance.

[4] Septuagint, "The Man." Kay renders it "a man;" others "every man," that is, all the rulers, and the king himself.

[5] Virgil, *Georg.*, iii. 145.

[6] The mocker will speak seriously.

Turning now to the women assembled, we may suppose, in the background, or at the side of the audience, the prophet addresses them separately :

"9. Arise, ye women that sit (unconcerned) at your ease; hear my voice, ye daughters so carelessly confident; give ear to my speech! 10. One year more,[1] and ye shall tremble, ye who think yourselves so secure! For the vintage shall be consumed, the fruit harvest will not be yours. (The enemy shall have both.) 11. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be in dismay, ye confident ones. Strip off your fine array; make you bare; and gird sackcloth (for lamentation) on your loins. 12. Beat on your bosoms, in sorrow, for your pleasant fields, for your fruitful vineyards. 13. On the land of My people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, on all the happy homes of this joyous city. 14. For the fine mansions round it will be forsaken; the hum of the city be silent;[2] Hill and Watch Tower[3] (where your gardens and mansions lie) will be for hiding places of foxes, and the like, for ever; a joy of wild asses; a pasture for flocks, 15. until the Spirit be poured out on us from on high. Then shall the pasture-wastes become a fruit-covered land, and the fruit-covered land will be no more esteemed than a mere forest is now. 16. Justice will then reign in the pasture-wastes, and righteousness dwell in the fruit-covered land. 17. And the effect of that righteousness shall be peace, and its fruit quiet and security for ever. 18. My people shall dwell in peaceful houses, and quiet resting places.

"19. When the hail (of Jehovah's wrath)[4] shall smite down the forest (-like army of the foe); when Jerusalem shall have been brought to direst extremity, (and shall have turned to its God, shall all this happen). 20. (In those blissful days,) happy will ye be who sow beside the (countless) waters (that will then irrigate the land), and who turn out the ox and the ass (to graze on the quiet pastures)!"

To these anxious weeks, also, we may refer another oration, directed against the invader himself.

[1] "A year, to the day, from this." Ewald. So, virtually, Delitzsch, Diestel, and others.

[2] Literally, "lonely," "desolate."

[3] Ophel, on the south of the city, and apparently the tower on the east of Zion Diestel.

[4] Isa. xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30.

"X. 5. Woe to Assyria," [1] cried the prophet, speaking as the voice of God to men, "Assyria, the rod of My anger, he in whose hands is the staff of My indignation! 6. I will send him against (Judah) an impious nation, and give him a charge against a people who have incurred My wrath—to take the spoil and carry off the plunder, and tread them down like the mire of the streets.

"7. But Assyria does not propose (thus to be merely My instrument), and his heart does not so intend: his thought is only to destroy and root up nation after nation (to extend his own glory). 8. For he says, 'Are not my princes kings? (do they not bear the title of kings? are they not, many of them, kings whom I have subdued? am not I, thence, called a king of kings—the Great King)?' [2] 9. Is not Calno, in Babylonia [3] (utterly destroyed), like Carchemish [4] (the great capital of the Hittite empire on the Euphrates)? Has not Hamath (on the Orontes) [5] fallen before me as Arpad (near Aleppo)? [6] Has not Samaria perished (before my armies), as Damascus did (earlier)? 10. As my hand has reached these, the kingdoms of gods helpless to protect them against me—though their images were more in number than those of Samaria and Jerusalem [7]—11. can I not do to Jerusalem and her helpless gods as I have done to Samaria and hers?' [8]

"12. But, when Jehovah has finished all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem—then, says He, will I visit in wrath the proud acts of the king of Assyria's heart, and the boasting of his haughty looks. 13. For he says, 'I have done all this by the strength of my own hand, and by my wisdom; for I am wise. I have swept away the boundaries of nations. I have plundered their treasures, and, like a god, cast down those that sat on thrones; 14. and my hand has seized the riches of the nations as one plunders a nest. Like one who gathers

[1] Isa. x. 5–xii. 6.

[2] Isa. xxxvi. 4. Hos. v. 13; viii. 10. Ezek. xxvi. 7. Dan. ii. 37.

[3] Site unknown. So utterly had the city been destroyed that it is not mentioned in classical antiquity. See Schrader, art. "Calno" in Riehm; *Keilinschriften*, 250.

[4] The site of this great commercial emporium of the Hittites was discovered by George Smith. It was at Hierapolis, on the Euphrates. See p. 386. The Manch of Gargamis (Carchemish) was a standard of weight in Western Asia. The city rose again for a time as an Assyrian stronghold, after Sennacherib had overthrown Tyre.

[5] Still an important town under the name of Hamath.

[6] Riehm, art. "Arpad."

[7] Samaria and Jerusalem had gods, among whom Sargon reckons Jehovah, but not so many as other nations had; every village in a heathen country had its god.

[8] Images of Baal and Astarte, and also Asherahs, with the "calves," besides. The gods of Samaria are called here "nothings" = "elilim;" those of Jerusalem, Atzabim = "cut," or "made things."

the eggs in a forsaken nest, which has no parent bird to defend it, or move the wing, or open the bill, or cry in its behalf, so have I gathered all the earth, no one resisting me!'

"15. Shall the axe boast against him who hews with it? Shall the saw magnify itself against him that wields it? Shall the rod bear itself as if it were not a mere piece of wood? 16. Therefore shall the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, send leanness among the well-nourished warriors (of the Great King), and beneath his glory shall be kindled a burning like that of a flaming brand. 17. The Light of Israel[1] shall Himself be the fire, the Holy One of Israel the flame, and shall kindle and devour the army of the Great King, like thorns and briers, in one day.[2] 18. Jehovah shall consume his glory, as the fire sweeps over both the forest and the garden ground. (I shall destroy his glory), both soul and body; his whole empire shall be as when a sick man pines away. 19. And what are left of the trees of his forest shall be so few—(his host shall so utterly vanish)—that a child may write the names of the survivors.

"20. And it will come to pass in that day that the remnant of Israel and those of the House of Jacob that have escaped, shall no longer lean upon him that smote them, but shall put themselves under the protection of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21. The remnant of Jacob shall return (in heart) to the mighty God. 22. For though Thy people, O Israel, (were once) like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them shall return. Destruction of most of them is determined, and that as a righteous punishment, sweeping through like a flood! 23. For the Lord Jehovah of Hosts shall carry out destruction, through the whole land, as His firm decision.

"24. Therefore, thus says the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, Fear not, My people, who dwell in Zion, because of Assyria, who smites thee with a rod, and lifts up his staff against thee, as the taskmasters once did in Egypt. 25. For in a very little while My indignation (against Judah) will cease, and my anger shall be turned (against the oppressor), to his destruction. 26. For Jehovah will lift up a scourge (to lash him) as he smote Midian at the rock of Oreb,[3] and as His rod was lifted up at the (Red) Sea (when he drowned the Egyptians in its depths). 27. On that day the burden laid on your back (by Assyria) shall be taken off, and his yoke removed from your neck; and it will be finally cast away by you in your strength."[4]

[1] Jehovah. [2] Literally fulfilled in the fate of Sennacherib. [3] Judg. vii. 25.
[4] Paraphrase embodying the sense. The metaphor is taken from an ox yoked to field work by its master.

But now it seems as if Isaiah already saw the approaching Assyrian hosts.

"28. He advances to Aiath (at the head of the pass from the Jordan),[1] he advances by Migron—["the precipice"]—he stores up his baggage at Michmash: 29. they go through the narrow defile; they make their camp at Geba; Ramah trembles; Gibeah of Saul flees![2] 30. Shriek aloud, O daughter of Gallim![3] Give ear, O Laishah;[4] echo back her cry, O Anathoth![5] 31. Madmenah[6] flees; the inhabitants of Gebim[7] save their goods by flight. 32. He will rest a day at Nob,[8] to prepare for the attack on Jerusalem. Thence will he shake his hand, (vowing vengeance) against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem!

"33. But, behold, the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts, shall hew down the crown of his branches with a dreadful crash; the lordly warriors (the lofty trees of his forest-like army) will be cut down; the haughty humbled; 34 (the rank and file)—the undergrowth of that forest—shall Jehovah hew down with iron; the Lebanon-like wood (of Assyria's array) shall fall by One that is mighty."

Assyria thus ignominiously driven off, and Judah delivered, the prophet sees in the distance[9] the coming of One who will restore it to more than its ancient glory—the Messiah of God.

"XI. 1. And there shall come forth a shoot from the decayed stock of Jesse, and a green sucker spring from its roots. 2. The Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him; the spirit of wisdom and understanding; the spirit of counsel and power; the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. 3. And the fear of Jehovah shall be the very breath

[1] They invade the country by the Wady Kelt and the Wady Suweinit. See vol. iii. p. 114.

[2] This is the route directly south-east towards Jerusalem. Michmash is 1,990 feet above the sea. Aiath is probably Ai. Migron, "the precipice," is not yet identified.

[3] = Springs. Unknown. Apparently, like the rest, in Benjamin.

[4] Not Laish or Dan, in the far north, but some village of Benjamin now vanished. Laishah = the lion.

[5] = Answers (to prayer). An hour and a quarter north of Jerusalem.

[6] = A dunghill. Unknown.

[7] = The cisterns or the locusts. Unknown.

[8] = A height. Fifty-five minutes north of Jerusalem, in a pleasant valley.

[9] Isa. xi.

of His life.[1] And He shall not give decisions from mere outward appearances (or the rank or wealth of the suitor), nor give sentence from report (nor from the conflicting statements of opposite sides). 4. But He will judge the helpless with righteousness, and give sentence with equity in favour of the suffering down-trodden in the land, but He will smite the tyrant[2] with the rod of His mouth, and slay the ungodly with the breath of His lips. 5. Righteousness shall be the girdle of His waist, and faithfulness the girdle of His loins.[3]

"6. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb; the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. 7. And the cow and the bear shall feed (together in the pastures); their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat (bruised[4]) straw like the ox. 8. And the child at the breast shall play beside the hole of the asp,[5] and the weaned child shall stretch out his hand on the hole of the great yellow viper.[6] 9. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover (the bed of) the sea.[7]

"10. And on that day the Stem from the root of Jesse shall stand (conspicuous from afar), as a banner to (gather) the people: the heathen also shall stream to Him, and the place where he makes His abode shall be glorious.[8]

"11. And it shall come to pass on that day, that Jehovah shall stretch out His hand a second time—(for He did it once before in Egypt)—to redeem (to Himself)[9] the remnant of His people which still survives—from Assyria, and from Lower Egypt,[10] and from Upper

[1] So, in effect, Herder, Ewald, Naegelsbach. [2] Lagarde. Cheyne.

[3] The words translated "loins" and "reins," both mean the loins, or the part round which the girdle was worn—the seat of strength.

[4] The teben or broken and softened straw from the threshing floor. See pp. 371, 381, 433.

[5] The pethen—apparently the deadly cobra, which is well known in Southern Palestine. It lurks in holes and walls of houses and fissures of the rocks. Tristram, p. 271.

[6] Dr. Tristram (*N. H. of B.*, p. 275) saw one spring at a quail and miss its body, but the bird fluttered only a few yards and then fell dying. The viper had made a very small puncture in the flesh of one of its wings.

[7] Virg., *Ecl.*, iv. 22; v. 60. Horat., *Epod.*, xvi. 30. Rom. viii. 22.

[8] By the concourse of nations to His "resting place," and by the righteousness of the judicial decisions given by Him there, to all.

[9] Literally, "to buy back," so as to have them for His own again.

[10] "Mizraim," the name for Egypt throughout Scripture, is in the dual, in recognition of the upper and lower kingdoms into which the valley of the Nile was always

Egypt, and from Ethiopia, and from Elam (east of the Tigris), and from Babylonia, and from Hamath (on the north), and from the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean—(lands to which they have been carried off as slaves).[1] 12. For Jehovah will set up (the Messiah as) a rallying banner for the heathen, and He will gather together the dispersed children of Israel and Judah from the four sides of the earth. 13. Then will the jealousy of Ephraim against Judah vanish, and those of Judah who would vex Ephraim shall be rooted out; Ephraim will not then be jealous of Judah, nor Judah disquiet Ephraim (as in past days).

"14. (Instead of this, Ephraim and Judah, together, in loving alliance, shall go forth to new conquests.) They shall pounce down on the shoulder[2] of the Philistines, towards the west (like eagles on their prey). They shall together spoil the sons of the East.[3] Edom and Moab shall be the prey of their hand; the children of Ammon shall obey them.

"15. And Jehovah shall smite asunder the waters of the Nile mouths[4] (to let the Hebrews return from Egypt again, dryshod, as they once did through the Red Sea); and He shall move His hand over the river Euphrates, and part it, by the glow of His breath, into seven channels, so that men shall go over in their sandals, 16. and thus a path shall be opened from Assyria for the still surviving remnant of His people, like that made for Israel when it marched up out of the land of Egypt.

"XII. 1. In that day Judah shall say:[5] 'I thank Thee, Jehovah, for though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortest me. 2. Behold, God is my salvation; I will (henceforth) trust (in Him, alone, not in man),[6] and I shall not fear! For Jehovah Jah is my strength and my song; He has been my salvation!'

divided, as shewn by the two crowns of the kings sculptured on the monuments, and by the hieroglyph for Egypt a double water-plant, or a double clod of earth. Sayce translates Mizraim by "the two Matsors," or "walls," from the Matsor on the east side of the Delta. Lower and Upper Egypt are meant. Upper Egypt was also called Pathros (Isa. xi. 11), which is the Egyptian Pe-tor-es, or southern land.

[1] By Shishak, Pul, Sargon, and others, including the slave dealers of Edom, Philistia, and Tyre.

[2] This word may be also translated "border," or "hill."

[3] The wandering Arab tribes, which so often invaded Palestine. Gen. xxix. 1. Judg. vi. 3; vii. 12; viii. 10. 1 Kings iv. 30. Job i. 3.

[4] Diestel. [5] Isa. xii.

[6] Ludin. Schrader thinks we should perhaps read Lubim—Libyans. Jer. xlvi. 9. *K. A. T.*, 90.

"3. Then (as, in the feast of Tabernacles, ye draw water for a drink-offering from the springs of Siloah), ye shall with joy draw blessing and favour from the salvation God has wrought for you (as from an exhaustless fountain). 4. And ye shall say in that day—'Give thanks to Jehovah; sound aloud His name! Make known His great deeds to the nations; tell that His name is highly exalted! 5. Sing (with the harp) to Jehovah, for mighty deeds hath He done: let them be known through the whole earth! 6. Sing aloud, yea shout, thou daughter[1] of Zion; for great in thy midst is the Holy One of Israel.'"

Nor did Jerusalem escape the vivid words of the great preacher. One of his homilies, which must have made a great sensation, has been preserved.

"XXIX. 1. Woe to the City of the Altar of God, His sacred hearth,"[2] he begins on this occasion—"the city[3] where David fixed his abode![4] Add year to year; let the feasts go their round. 2. Yet I will bring distress on the Altar City, and there will be sighing and moaning, but it shall be to me an Altar City, indeed!

"3. Yet I will encamp round thee: I will surround thee with watch posts,[5] and raise battering machines against thee, and thou shalt be brought low. 4. And thou shalt speak from the earth; thy words shall come faintly from the ground, and thy voice shall rise, hollow, like a ghost's, from the earth; thy feeble whisper shall come from the dust. 5. And the number of thy foes shall be like fine dust: the host of the mighty ones (coming against thee) shall be like the flying chaff (of the threshing floor), and all this shall come suddenly, in a moment. 6. There shall (indeed) be a sore visitation (on thee) from Jehovah of Hosts (as) with (the crash of) thunder; earthquake and a great noise; whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire! 7. And as a dream, as a vision of the night, shall be the multitude of nations that encamp against the Altar City; that fight against her and her defences, and press her sorely. 8. Yet as when the hungry man dreams that he eats, and on waking finds his mouth empty, or as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, and on waking is faint, and his soul still craves a draught; so shall it be with the multitude of all the heathen

[1] Inhabitress. [2] Isa. xxix. [3] Jerusalem.
[4] Literally, "encamped."
[5] Delitzsch. Knobel. Diestel. Nægelsbach.

who fight against Mount Zion (for they will not, after all, be able to destroy her)!"

There is no need, therefore, to seek human help in Egypt or elsewhere. Jehovah, alone, is an all-sufficient Protector. The Assyrian will assuredly come, but God will destroy him and save Jerusalem and Judah. Yet the false prophets and the unfaithful leaders of the people have refused to trust in God, and have sought an Egyptian alliance, which would bring ruin. The prophet has spoken a riddle, he will now explain it.

"9. Stand wonderstruck and stare (ye people, at what I tell you); shut your eyes and make yourselves blind (by your dull unbelief which understands not my words! The day will shew their truth!)

"You are drunk, but not with wine; you reel, but not with strong drink. 10. Jehovah has poured on you the spirit of deep sleep; your eyes—(the prophets)—are fast shut in slumber; your heads—(the seers)—has Jehovah covered (with the mantle of sleep).[1] 11. Hence, the Vision of His Will (made known by me, His servant) has become to you like the words of a sealed roll, which is given to one who knows letters, to read it, and he says, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' 12. It is shut up to you as much as a roll delivered to one who cannot read, who has to say that he is unlettered.

"13. Therefore the Lord has said, Since this people draw near to Me with their mouth (only), and honour Me (only) with their lips, while their heart is far from Me, and their worship of Me is but (outward), according to the commandments of men;[2] 14. therefore, behold, I will still further deal wonderfully with them, wonderfully beyond thought; so that the wisdom of their wise men shall be proved folly, and the understanding of their knowing ones shall hide itself (ashamed)!

"15. Woe to those who try hard to shroud their plans from Jehovah; who seek to work them out in secret,[3] and say, 'who sees or knows us?' 16. Out on your perverseness! Is the clay to be as highly

[1] Orientals cover their heads in sleeping. Niebuhr, *Arab.*, p. 10. Sonnini's *Egypt*, vol. ii. p. 334.

[2] Ritual prescriptions, which were already carefully laid down. Hos. viii. 12. Jer. viii. 8.

[3] Referring to the secret schemes for a treaty with Egypt.

thought of as the potter who works it, that his handiwork shall say to its maker, 'He did not make me,' or the thing formed say of him that formed it, 'He has no understanding'? (Judah is the clay, Jehovah is the potter; are you wiser or abler than He, to do what is best for the land, that you take the work into your own hands, out of His, by your plotting?)

"17. (Ye little know what is before you!) In a very short time, 'Lebanon shall be turned into fruitful gardens,' and what are now 'fruitful gardens will be counted a forest.' 18. In that day those who are (now) deaf to my words shall hear what is written, and the eyes of those who are (now) blind (to the truth) will see, amidst the gloom and darkness of their visitation. 19. And the humble shall increase their joy in Jehovah; the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. 20. For the tyrannical great man shall then have come to naught, and the scoffers (of to-day) shall have ceased, and those that (now) watch to do iniquity shall be rooted out—21. those who condemn men for a word, and lay snares for those who complain (before the judges) at the city gate,[1] and drive away the upright (from the judgment seat) through the lies of false witnesses.[2]

"22. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah to the House of Jacob—He that redeemed Abraham (from all dangers)—Jacob shall no longer (when that time comes) be ashamed; neither shall his face any longer grow pale. 23. For when he, or (rather) his sons,[3] see the work of My hands in their midst, they shall hallow My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and fear the God of Israel. 24. And even those who were of a perverse spirit shall come to understanding, and the murmurers accept instruction."

At last the huge avalanche of war burst on the plains of Phœnicia. Sidon first felt its shock. Help was not at hand from Egypt. Elulæus, the rebel king, had to flee to Cyprus,[4] or some other island of the Levant, and a more complaisant vassal—Ethobaal—was put in his place and bound to pay the wonted tribute. The chiefs or kings of Arvad and Gebal on the north; of Ashdod on the south; and of Ammon, Moab, and Edom, terrified at the presence of such a host,

[1] Hos. iv. 1. [2] Literally, "a mere nothing." I have followed Delitzsch
[3] By some, the words "his sons" is thought to be a gloss.
[4] Sennacherib's annals, *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 37.

or, as the inscriptions say, "at the flash of the weapons of Asshur." Sennacherib's god, presently submitted, and renewed their homage, kissing the feet of the Great King, presenting rich gifts and engaging to pay tribute, on seeing Sidon fall without a blow. Zedekiah, king of Askelon, a nominee, we may fancy, of Hezekiah, foolishly stood out, but was forthwith brushed aside by the invaders; another vassal king put in his place, and himself, his whole family, in all its branches, his god, and all his property, carried off by the Assyrians. The towns of Beth-dagon and Joppa, with two others whose names are unknown—all four, subject to Zedekiah—suffered bitterly for having supported him. Hezekiah, alone, now, withheld his submission. So far, the march towards Egypt had been a triumphal progress.

The excitement in Jerusalem at these events was intense. The city was as far as possible put in a state of defence. Hezekiah had again compromised himself. "The priests, chief men, and common people of Ekron," says Sennacherib, "had thrown into chains their king Padiah because he was faithful to his oath to Assyria, and they had given him over to Hezekiah the Jew, who shut him up, like an enemy, in a dungeon at Jerusalem."

Meanwhile a division of the enemy was laying waste southern Judah. Ekron speedily fell, and was treated with terrible severity. "The chief priests and great men who committed these crimes," say the annals, "I put to death, and hung their bodies on stakes all round the city. I gave over to slavery the people of the town who had committed sins and crimes, but spared the rest." With such news flying round and the certainty that the turn of Jerusalem would come very soon, the excitement in that city grew daily greater. There could be no doubt that the surrender

of Padiah would be demanded, and vengeance taken for the past. In the midst of this terror and demoralization the voice of the prophet was once more heard.

"XXII. 1. What[1] aileth thee now, O Jerusalem," cried he, shortly before the Assyrians appeared, "that all thine inhabitants have gone up to your (flat) housetops (looking out for the foe, watching the country people streaming towards the gates for protection, or vainly expecting the sight of help from Tirhakah)! 2. O city, full of stir, and noise, and baseless joy! Thy men slain, as yet, have not fallen by the sword or in battle (but by hunger and pestilence, through overcrowding). 3. Thy nobles, fleeing as a body (from the bow of the Assyrian, whom they expect to see presently), are taken prisoner by their

HELMETS, AND STYLE OF WEARING THE HAIR AND BEARD IN THE ASSYRIAN ARMY.

archers (the vanguard of the enemy);[2] all whom they find (outside the gates), seeking to flee afar, are (caught and) put in chains.[3]

"4. For this, look away from me; let me weep bitterly. Do not press round, to comfort me amidst the ruin of Jerusalem, the daughter of my people! 5. Jehovah of Hosts has sent us a day of trouble, defeat, and dismay, in the Valley of Vision.[4] They beleaguer the walls; the citizens cry for help to the hill of Zion (where Jehovah dwells)!

"6. The foot-soldiers from Elam have put on their quivers; a long drawn array of chariots and riders follows; the troops from Kir (the next land to Elam) have taken the (leather) covers (of the march) from their shields (to be ready for battle); 7. the fairest valleys (east, west, and south of Jerusalem) are full of chariots, and cavalry posts are set in line over against the gates.

"8. Thus God discloses to Judah her weakness. (The veil that has

[1] Isa. xxii. 1-14. [2] 1 Macc. ix. 11.

[3] On the six-sided clay prism of Sennacherib he says of Jerusalem: "All who came outside the great gate of the city were captured and led off."

[4] So called, perhaps, as the place where Isaiah and other prophets lived perhaps where the guild of the prophets was.

hidden her real condition is now drawn aside), and ye will examine the state of the arsenal of the House of the Forest.[1] 9. Ye have already noted how many breaches there are in (the walls of Mount Zion), the City of David[2] (the highest and strongest of the whole defences). Ye have collected the waters of the Lower Pool, west of Zion (stopping its outflow, to store its supplies); 10. and counted the houses of Jerusalem, breaking down some (which might be used by the enemy), to heighten the walls (with their material, and fill up the breaches). 11. Ye have made a reservoir between the two walls for the waters of the Old Pool.[3] But ye have not looked to Jehovah, the just source of all your adversity, nor regarded Him who, from afar, prepared this tribulation for you!

"12. Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, calls you on a day like this to weeping and mourning; to cut off your hair, and gird yourselves with sackcloth (in token of penitence). 13. But, instead of this, behold, you give yourselves up to lightness and revelry, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep for feasting; eating flesh and drinking wine; saying, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' (Some act thus in the recklessness of despair: some in mockery of the words of the prophets, trusting yet in their hearts that Egypt will deliver them!)

"14. But Jehovah has revealed Himself in my ears, saying, Such iniquity shall never be forgiven till ye die, saith Jehovah of Hosts!"

Orders had already been given to a corps of the army to march against Jerusalem, and presently the hill passes echoed to the tramp of the Assyrian infantry and the roll of their chariots. Fire and blood marked the progress of the invaders. Forty-six of Hezekiah's fenced cities were taken by storm, and numerous castles and villages, with a large amount of material of war. The whole population that could be captured were led off as slaves, to the number of 200,150, "small and great, male and female," with "horses, mares, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep beyond counting." Hezekiah, himself, awaited the bursting of the

[1] Built by Solomon—the House of the Forest of Lebanon. 1 Kings vii. 2; x. 17. Isa. xxxix. 2.

[2] The part of Jerusalem known by that name.

[3] The steps taken in Sargon's time were repeated. See p. 390.

storm in Jerusalem. There, he was very soon closely blockaded, and preparations were begun for a regular siege.

"I shut him up," says Sennacherib, "like a bird, inside Jerusalem, his royal city, and constructed siege towers against him, for he had given command to renew the defences of the great gate of the city."

In this terrible crisis, as in the past, Isaiah, now a man of about sixty, being, as usual, in the town, raised his voice fearlessly to calm the terrors of his fellow-citizens and prevent universal panic and dismay. No danger appalled him. With the Assyrian before the walls, his confidence in Jehovah as the deliverer of His people never for a moment faltered.

"XIV. 24. Jehovah of Hosts has sworn," cried he: "'As I have devised so, surely, shall it come to pass; what I have purposed, that shall stand; 25. to scatter to the winds the Assyrian in My land; to tread him under foot on My mountains! Then shall his yoke be lifted from off My people; his burden removed from their back.'

"26. This is the purpose which God has determined (not for Judah alone, but) for the whole earth (now groaning under the tyrant). For this, it is, that the hand of Jehovah is stretched out over all the nations! 27. Jehovah of Hosts hath decreed this, and who shall annul it? His is the outstretched hand; who can turn it back?"[1]

The scarlet cloaks and bright red shields of the Assyrians;[2] the strange dresses of the many foreign and barbarous contingents in the besieging force; their countless chariots; their standards, and their tents, as was remembered centuries after, covered the level space before the north gate, the slopes of the hills around, and the hollow of the neighbouring valleys.[3] Deliverance seemed hopeless

[1] Isa. xiv. 24–27.

[2] Nah. ii. 3.

[3] Jos., *Bell.*, V. xii. 2. The hills facing Jerusalem on the north were known till the fall of the city as The Camp of the Assyrians.

to some; others trusted to help from Tirhakah. As usual in times of intense excitement, the most opposite passions and moods were displayed. Not a few indulged in the license of despair. Drunkenness and unrestrained debauchery rioted. Isaiah had lost control of the mass of the citizens, though some still listened to him with pale faces. The siege formally began, for Hezekiah would not surrender. Great bodies of men laboured at the defences, but famine advanced apace.

But resistance was ere long felt to be hopeless, and Hezekiah capitulated, agreeing to pay the penalty which Sennacherib might impose for his revolt. What it was, the annals tell us.

"I cut off from his kingdom his cities which I plundered, and gave them to the kings of Ashdod, Ekron, and Gaza. I diminished his kingdom. I raised the yearly gifts and tribute he was to pay to my majesty above the former scale. The fearful splendour of my majesty had overwhelmed him. The workmen, soldiers, and masons whom he had collected for the fortification of Jerusalem, now carried tribute, which he sent after me to my royal city, Nineveh. It consisted of 30 talents of gold, 800 talents of silver;[1] woven cloth; scarlet, embroidered; precious stones of large size; couches of ivory; movable thrones of ivory; skins of buffaloes; buffalo teeth; dan wood; ku wood; a great treasure of every kind; and his daughters, and the male and female inmates of his palace, with male slaves and female slaves. He sent also an envoy with the tribute and to do homage."[2]

A treaty having been made on these humiliating terms, the Assyrians withdrew to the Maritime Plain, where Sennacherib now was. Thither the heavy tribute exacted was first conveyed; Assyrian officials having raised the money by an impost on the citizens,[3] and having duly weighed it when

[1] Equal to 300 Jewish talents. 2 Kings xviii. 14. Brandis.
[2] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 41. Riehm, p. 1360. Menant, p. 218.
[3] Isa. xxxiii. 18.

delivered. But to pay such an amount strained public and private resources to the utmost. The temple treasury and the palace exchequer were emptied, and the gold still left on the gates and door posts of the sanctuary stripped off.[1]

Padiah, of Ekron, was of course surrendered. The Great King tells us, "I had him brought out from the dungeon in Jerusalem, and seated him on the throne of royalty over the cities of Philistia which had rebelled, and laid on him the tribute due to my majesty." His loyalty to Assyria thus, at last, met a fitting recognition.

Jerusalem had now submitted, and by doing so had escaped the horrors of a protracted siege, but some towns on the sea-coast plain still remained to be taken. Before one of these, Lachish, which has been identified as the present Tel el Hesy, the army of Sennacherib was now encamped.

The doomed place lay on a hill about five hundred feet above the sea, which was twenty miles off, on the west, Gaza being eighteen miles away in the same direction, Lachish looking down on the rolling space between from its height, which was the last spur of the western slope of the Hebron hills. Its position and strength had enabled it, so long ago as the time of Joshua, to withstand attack for two days, though other towns on all sides yielded at the first assault.[2] The original population had been Amorite highlanders,[3] and their love of independence seems to have passed to their successors. The town had been fortified by Rehoboam after the secession of the Ten Tribes,[4] but appears

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 1, ff. 2 Chron. xxxii. 1, ff. Isa. xxxvi. 1, ff.
[2] Josh. x. 3, 5, 26, 31–33, 35.
[3] Josh. x. 6.
[4] 2 Chron. xi. 9.

to have escaped the fate which overtook most of his strongholds during the invasion of Shishak.

Thither Sennacherib had marched "with all his power," to conduct the siege in person, and the city was soon after taken by storm and delivered to the tender mercies of the soldiery.[2] A slab from his palace at Nineveh, now in the British Museum, shews him in state "receiving the plunder of the town of Lachish." He sits on a throne before his tent; two arrows in one hand and his bow in the other,

JEWS IMPLORING MERCY FROM SENNACHERIB, AT LACHISH. *From the Sculptures.*

while prisoners are being brought before him; an officer attended by a guard stating the facts respecting them. Two eunuchs stand with feather flaps to wave over him, for coolness and to keep away the flies. Two horses, ready for his use, are behind; soldiers with tall lances attending them. The front rank of prisoners before him kneel, to implore mercy, and behind them is a long file of their unfortunate companions. Some whose fate has already been decided have been led a short way off and killed; others may be

[1] 2 Chron. xxxii. 9.

[2] "I give permission for its slaughter." Words of Sennacherib on the great tablet of the siege of Lachish. Layard's *Nineveh and Babylonia*, pp. 149–152.

spared, as slaves. A chariot with two horses stands near—perhaps that of Sennacherib; and numerous fruit trees over the whole slab shew the fruitfulness of the country. A strong force of horse and foot, on the right of the picture, guards the king.

News now came to the Assyrian camp, however, that Tirhakah, king of Egypt and Ethiopia, glad of the opportunity of coming forward in Egyptian affairs in the character of protector and suzerain, was advancing by forced marches, with all his troops, against the Assyrians. For some reason, perhaps to get contingents of local forces, the Egyptian army, marching past Lachish and leaving it in their rear, streamed on to Eltekeh,[1] a place, apparently, only about two miles south of Bethhoron the Nether, and thus quite a distance north of the Assyrians. Thither, however, Sennacherib presently marched, and Tirhakah's invasion was hopelessly routed.

"The king of Egypt," say the annals,[2] "and the soldiers, archers, chariots, and horses of Ethiopia—countless in numbers—gathered together and came to the assistance" of the people of Ekron and of Hezekiah. "They placed their battle array before me in the plains of Eltekeh and discharged their arrows; but I fought and defeated them with the weapons of Asshur, my lord. My hands captured, in the midst of the battle, the chief of the chariots, and the sons of the king of Egypt, and the chief of the chariots of the king of Ethiopia. I attacked, took, and plundered the towns of Eltekeh and Timnah."[3]

[1] Josh. xix. 44; xxi. 23. [2] *Records of the Past*, vol. i. p. 39.

[3] In Judah. Josh. xv. 10. It was on the northern boundary of Judah, west from Jerusalem, and half way towards Ashdod. After a time it was assigned to Dan (Josh. xix. 43); but as a rule it was held by the Philistines. It is now Tibne—a heap of ruins. Rob., *Pal.*, vol. ii. p. 599. Guerin, *Judée*, vol. ii. p. 30.

It seemed now as if Hezekiah's submission had been a mere cloak to secure time for the arrival of the Cushite monarch. Furious at being apparently thus overreached, Sennacherib at once sent back a flying corps to Jerusalem with three of the high officers of the palace—the Tartan, or general-in-chief, the Rabsaris, or chief of the eunuchs, and the Rabshakeh, or chief of the military staff[1]—as bearers of an ultimatum to the Jewish king.

The reappearance of the Assyrians before Jerusalem filled the city with dismay, which was increased when their demands were made known. The rumour of Tirhakah's approach; the fierce attack on Lachish; all the news of the war, had reached Jerusalem. The return of the Assyrian force may have been expected, through reports brought from the camp. The gates were once more shut, and the walls manned. In the crisis Isaiah again harangued the people in a succession of magnificent orations, of which the following seems to have been the earliest.

"XVII. 12. Ah![2] They are come at last! The hum of troops from many nations, murmuring like the waves of seas. Hark! the tumult as if of whole nations, like the tumult of mighty waters!

"13. The roar of the nations under the banners of Assyria is like the roaring of many waters; but at the rebuke of Jehovah they will presently flee afar; chased (by the storm of His indignation) as the chaff flies over the mountains before the wind (from the threshing-floors on the hill-tops),[3] and like the whirling dust before the hurricane.

"14. Terror shall seize us at the evening tide when they come, but before morning they will have fled! This is the portion of them that spoil us; the lot of them who plunder us!"

The prophet now addresses Egypt—under Tirhakah—the

[1] Mühlau und Volck. The Assyrian title is Rabsak. See also Lenormant, *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. ii. p. 361. Schrader, p. 199.

[2] Isa. xvii. 12–14; xviii. 1–7.

[3] Herzog, vol. iii. p. 504.

great enemy of Assyria, whose approach was not yet known in Jerusalem; the decisive defeat of Eltekeh also being still future.

"XVIII. 1. O land of the buzz of fly-swarms[1]—(emblem of countless armies)—by the rivers of Ethiopia, 2. which art sending messengers upon the seas, and in swift, light, papyrus boats[2] along all your waters (to gather allies, and muster all the force of your empire):

"Go (back to your homes), ye swift messengers—go back (to Ethiopia)—the tall and strong race, terrible in war from their rise till now—the nation very strong and all subduing,[3] whose land is seamed with rivers! (Jehovah, alone, will destroy the invader!)

"3. All ye inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, when the signal of the approach of the enemy is lifted up on the mountains, take notice; when the alarm trumpet is blown, give ear!

"4. For thus hath Jehovah said to me: 'I will take My rest (while the Assyrians advance); I will keep My eyes on them (through the whole summer), while the unclouded sunshine ripens the herbs, and the night mists temper the heat of harvest. 5. But, before the vintage, when the flowering is over and the blossom is swelling into a ripe grape, I will[4] lop off the branches with pruning knives, and cut down and clear away the shoots. 6. They shall, together, be left to the vultures and kites of the mountains, and to the wild beasts of the land: the birds shall summer on them, and the wild beasts shall winter on them.

"7. In that day will gifts of homage be brought to Jehovah of Hosts from the tall and strong nation: the people terrible in war, from their rise: the nation very strong and all-subduing, whose land is seamed with rivers—to the place where the name of Jehovah of Hosts is honoured—Mount Zion."

Meanwhile the commissioners from Sennacherib took measures to carry out their master's commands. Hezekiah had

[1] Delitzsch. Stinging flies are thought of. Knobel renders the word, "When the shadow falls both ways," but this is doubtful. [2] Job ix. 26.

[3] The Ethiopians, under Tirhakah, afterwards subdued Egypt, extending their conquests even to the Pillars of Hercules. They were renowned in antiquity as one of the most ancient races, mighty in war and never subdued.—Diod., iii. 2; Pliny, *H. N.*, vi. 35—and Tirhakah was ranked, as a conqueror, with Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar. Strabo, xv. 686.

[4] In the Hebrew it is "he," but Jehovah is referred to.

already submitted on the display of force, and he might do so again. Advancing close to the walls, therefore, they demanded a parley, which, of course, was at once granted. Strangely enough, they took their stand by the conduit of the Upper Pool, on the highway running past the Fuller's Field, the very spot where, not far from the walls, Ahaz had had his interview with Isaiah.[1] On Hezekiah's side, Eliakim, now prefect of the palace in the place of Shebna,[2] and that dignitary himself, acting as royal scribe, and one Joah, the royal remembrancer and annalist, went to the nearest part of the wall[3] to hear the overtures of the Assyrians. Hezekiah himself declined to appear, as beneath his kingly dignity.

The Rabshakeh, or chief of the staff, had been chosen as speaker[4] for Sennacherib. Since Hezekiah had not thought fit to come personally, his ministers were to tell their master, whom the speaker did not honour by the royal title, that it was clear he had secret relations with some outside power, else he never would have ventured thus to defy the Great King. What did such confidence mean? On whom did he trust in resisting Sennacherib and refusing to surrender Jerusalem? It was only idle talk to say that he trusted to his own abilities and resources. His silence was now treated as a virtual confession, and the Rabshakeh proceeded to ask in direct terms, to whom Hezekiah really looked, that he should thus have rebelled against so mighty a king.[5] Then, without waiting for an answer he went on—

"XXXVI. 6. (I know the whole truth), you have trusted in Egypt[6] (you have taken it for the staff on which to lean); a poor broken reed,

[1] Isa. vii. 3. See p. 325.
[2] Isa. xxii. 20.
[3] Isa. xxxvi. 11.
[4] Isa. xxxvi. 4.
[5] Judah had been tributary to Assyria since the days of Ahaz.
[6] Isa. xxxvi. 6-10.

which can give no support, but will shiver under the weight of your hand, and pierce it. 7. Perhaps, however," he continued, "you will tell me you trust in Jehovah, your God. But how can you hope that He will deliver you, when Hezekiah has insulted Him by taking away His high places and His altars [1] in Judah and Jerusalem, and by setting up one altar before which alone the people are to worship?[2]

"8. (Fight the Great King! Well then, supposing you try issues with him? I am willing to help you.) If you can find 2,000 men fit for cavalry service in Jerusalem, I shall give you 2,000 horses for them. 9. But, even then, how could you hope to repel the force of a single (subordinate) officer of the king, my master! It is idle to speak of your acting on your own strength. (Such a petty kingdom must look to foreign aid.) This is why you trust in Egypt for chariots and cavalry!

"10. (More than that. You talk of looking to Jehovah for help. Do you think that Sennacherib has come up against this land, to destroy it, without a commission from Jehovah to do so? No, indeed.) (Our spies have told us the words of your prophets)—how Jehovah said to the Great King, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.' (So much for your hope of deliverance from your God!)"

The keenness of these words lay in their truth. Spoken aloud from beyond the wall, they were heard by the crowd, which stood near enough to the ministers on the parapet to catch all that was said. Feeling the danger of a panic or a revolt in the city, as the words of the Assyrian spread, Hezekiah's representatives, simply enough, begged the Rabshakeh to speak Aramaic or Syriac [3] rather than Hebrew,[4] in which the high official of Sennacherib could converse fluently, as members of our own government speak other languages besides English.

But the Assyrian was not the man to give such an advantage to his opponents.

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 4. 2 Chron. xxxi. 1. [2] Isa. xxxvi. 7.

[3] The Aramaic was the commercial language of Syria, Palestine, and Western Asia, and ultimately supplanted Hebrew among the Jews themselves. Private contract tables in Assyrian and Aramaic have been found at Nineveh.

[4] The phrase, "the Jews' language," Isa. xxxvi. 11, has apparently been substituted for the Hebrew language by some later reviser of the sacred text. It is an expression of more recent date.

"XXXVI. 12. ('Speak in Aramaic!' said he;) do you think I am sent to speak to you, then, or to your master? No, I am sent to these men, the defenders of the wall, to tell them the misery they will endure if they continue to resist the Great King (and of course I shall use their language)."

Then lifting his voice, and speaking at his loudest in Hebrew, he addressed the citizens and soldiers within farthest hearing:

"13. Listen, all of you, to the words of the Great King, the king of Assyria! 14. He bids me tell you not to let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you. 15. And don't let him induce you to trust in Jehovah for deliverance. 16. Pay no attention to what he says, but give heed to the offers of my master, the Great King. 'Make peace with me,' says he, 'and come out to me (and give up your city into my hands), and then you shall live peaceably, every man eating the fruit of his own vine and fig-tree, and drinking the water of his own cistern, 17. till I come (after the war is over), and take you away to another land like your own, a land of corn and wine, of bread and vineyards,[1] of generous olive trees and of honey.' Listen to these words of the Great King, that ye may live and not die, and hearken not to Hezekiah.[2]

"18. Beware lest Hezekiah move you (to further resistance by) saying 'Jehovah will deliver us.' Has any of the gods of the nations delivered his land out of the hands of the king of Assyria? 19. Where are the gods of Hamath (in the north), or of Sepharvaim (in Mesopotamia)? And did the gods of Samaria deliver that city out of my hands)? 20. And if all these gods were helpless against the gods of my master, how much less will Jehovah, (the weak God of a weak people,) be able to resist him!"

This fierce and blasphemous boasting was received in profound silence, Hezekiah having wisely forbidden a word of reply, lest it might provoke the Assyrians to fiercer hostility; perhaps to an instant attempt to storm the city. The parley having ended, the Assyrians rode back to their camp.

[1] Isa. xxxvi. 17. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 32.

The three ministers of Hezekiah, greatly distressed by the tone and demands of the enemy, now made their way to the palace, their clothes rent, and they and the people filling the air with lamentation.[1] The news appalled the king. Rending his robes in bitterness of soul, he forthwith put on sackcloth, in token of grief, and, like the good man he was, went straight to the temple, to lay his case before God. The whole court, also, assumed coarse black mantles of sackcloth,[2] and Eliakim and Shebna, with the senior priests, in these robes of mourning, were sent to tell Isaiah what had happened.

"XXXVII. 3. This is a day of trouble,"[3] said they to him, in the name of Hezekiah, "a day of trouble and of rebuke from God, and of blasphemy from the heathen. The city is in the most critical and desperate state, and has no power to help itself. 4. It may be that Jehovah, thy God, will note the blasphemous words of the Rabshakeh, whom the Great King, his master, has sent to insult the Living God, and will deal punishment on him for them, and may the king ask that you lift up your prayer for those of us that are left?"

The reply of Isaiah was sublime.

"6. Tell your master," he replied, "that Jehovah commands him not to fear the blasphemous words he has heard from these slaves[4] of the king of Assyria. 7. 'Behold,' says Jehovah, 'I will put such a spirit in him that he shall hear a rumour and shall retreat to his own country, and there I will cause him to fall by the sword.'"[5]

Encouraged by such an assurance, Hezekiah forthwith sent back his answer to the Assyrians, refusing under any circumstances to deliver up the city, and the Rabshakeh

[1] Isa. xxxvi. 22.

[2] *i.e.*, cloth for sacking.

[3] Isa. xxxvii. 3-7.

[4] Literally, "young men," a contemptuous phrase.

[5] This was spoken in 701. Sennacherib was murdered in Assyria, by his sons, in 681, nineteen years later.

had to return with this irritating news to Libnah, which Sennacherib had now begun to besiege.[1]

During these days or weeks of intense excitement and anxiety, Isaiah was fearless and defiant as ever. Hezekiah and his people heard his voice again and again, rousing them to trust in Jehovah even in this darkest hour. An oration, apparently of this date, has come down to us.

"XXXIII. 1. Woe."[2] cried the great patriot prophet, "woe to thee, thou Spoiler of Nations, though thyself unspoiled; thou that shewest violence when no violence has been shewn to thee! (Wherefore invadest thou Judah, which has not wronged thee?) When thou hast ended thy permitted work as a spoiler, thou thyself shalt be spoiled! When thou hast finished the violence thou art allowed to shew, violence will be meted out to thyself!

"2. O Jehovah! be gracious unto us; in Thee do we trust. Be Thou the Arm of Thy people each morning (to protect and help through the day). Be Thou our salvation in this time of trouble!

"3. At the voice of the thunder (that heralds Thy approach) the (many) peoples (of the Assyrian army) flee! When Thou liftest up Thyself (against them), their nations are scattered! 4. The spoil of your host (O peoples) will be carried off by us, as locusts strip the spoil of the field; as they spread swiftly over the ground in countless numbers, so shall the inhabitants of Jerusalem rush out to the booty.

"5. Jehovah is exalted (as the Victor), for He sits throned in the heavens! He has filled Zion with justice (by His judgments) and with righteousness (by His faithfulness to His promises). 6. Wisdom and knowledge (to feel and act on this) will be the security of thy times (O Judah), against future attacks (of thine enemies); they will be to thee a fountain of safety. The fear of Jehovah is man's treasure!"

Terrified by the stern conditions delivered to him, Hezekiah sought to deprecate the wrath of Sennacherib, of which terrible rumours had spread to Jerusalem.

He could not bear up as Isaiah urged against the terrors

[1] Isa. xxxvii. 8.

[2] Isa. xxxiii. 1-6.

of the ultimatum presented, enforced, as it was, by the host encamped before the walls; for, if Sennacherib's annals speak truly, he was shut up in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage, and siege towers were raised, and the gates forced to be closed against any egress or entrance. We know from Isaiah's words that the army did no more than approach the capital, and did not shoot even one arrow against it, or come before it with a shield, or cast up a mound against it, but it must at least have been virtually shut up, and the roll of the Assyrian drums, the blare of the trumpets, and the flash of the spears must have been heard or seen when the Tartan and his fellow-officers advanced with a supporting detachment to deliver Sennacherib's summons. Terror stricken, especially as no news of help from Tirhakah had come, Hezekiah humbled himself before the invader and sent an embassy to Libnah, which Sennacherib was now besieging, Lachish having just fallen. It may be that he had delayed to fulfil the conditions imposed on him by the Great King, and that this had led to the insulting message of Rabshakeh, and the demand for possession of the city, but in any case, if it had not been done before, he now sent off, with his envoys, Padiah of Ekron, who had been a prisoner in Jerusalem, and also the tribute, consenting to pay the terrible fine laid on him. He would do anything but surrender the city, which, however, was the inexorable condition demanded by Sennacherib. The envoys found the Assyrian king before Libnah, after the storming of Lachish, which, as we have seen, had been turned into a shambles by the assailants. But the mission met with no success, and was sent back without being even allowed an audience. On this Isaiah forthwith based another discourse:

"7. The lion-like ones (sent to Libnah, to Sennacherib,[1] as suppliants for peace, return crushed by the hard conditions, and) weep without the gates as they approach; the messengers of peace weep bitterly. 8. The roads lie desolate; travel on them has ceased. Sennacherib has broken the treaty; he uses our cities shamefully; he regards no man. 9. The whole land mourns and languishes. Lebanon stands ashamed and withers away; the rich sea-coast plains are like a desert; Bashan and Carmel are bare! 10. Now will I arise, saith Jehovah; now will I stand forth; now will I lift myself up! Your designs (against Judah) are idle (O Assyria). 11. Ye conceive withered grass; ye bring forth stubble (both the light fuel of the oven)! Your own flaming breath (the breath of your raging fury against the nations) shall consume you! 12. The peoples (under your banners) will be burnt up (and reduced to dust) like lime—they shall be like the cuttings of thorn bushes that are burnt in the fire.

"13. Hear, ye (nations) that are far off, what I have (thus) done; ye that are near (and have seen it), acknowledge My might! 14. The transgressors in Zion (itself) tremble (lest judgment be let loose on them also, as well as the Assyrians): terror has seized the ungodly! 'Oh, who,' cry they (in their guilty fears) 'can escape[2] this devouring fire of God's wrath? Who can escape from the undying flames (of His judgments)?' 15. He (let me answer) that walks in righteousness and is upright in his words; who despises the gains of bribery and keeps his hands clean from it: who stops his ears from hearing schemes of murder or violence; who closes his eyes from looking on evil. 16. Such a man shall dwell high (above danger); he will be safe (from the judgments around, as) in (an unassailable fortress of) the rocks; his bread will be given him; his water shall not fail.

"17. (Yet these judgments will pass away)! Thine eyes (O Jerusalem) shall (once more) see the king in his beauty (arrayed in his splendour, and no longer humbled and clad in sackcloth as now);[3] and behold the land, far and near (freed from the enemy, and restored to Judah)! 18. Thy heart shall think of the (past) terror. Where is now the Assyrian who assessed the tribute; where is he who weighed it (when handed over)? Where is (the leader of the besieging force), who counted the towers of Jerusalem, to storm them? 19. Thou shalt no longer see the barbarous people, the people of dark unintelligible speech, whose stammering words one could not understand.[4]

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 7–24.

[2] Ewald, "who can protect us from!"

[3] Isa. xxxvii. 1. 2 Kings vi. 30.

[4] Though allied to Hebrew, the Assyrian language was unintelligible to the people of Palestine.

"20. (Thou shalt surely, O Jehovah), look on Zion, the city of our religious feasts; Thine eyes shall look down on Jerusalem (as) our peaceful home—a tent that will not wander; whose pins shall never be pulled up; whose cords shall never be rent away.[1] 21. For there Jehovah is (our defender), instead of the broad rivers and moats (that protect other cities. Jehovah Himself will be to us a wide girdle of waters) which no war-galley with its banks of oars will enter, and which no war-ship shall attempt to pass over. 22. For Jehovah is our Judge; Jehovah our Commander; Jehovah our King! He will save us!

"23. Thy ropes hang slack (O Zion, now the enemy is on thee)! they will not hold up the mast, nor keep upright a flagstaff on which thy pennon may spread out. But (when Assyria flees) then shall the spoil of a mighty booty be divided; (even) the lame will (be able to) seize a share! 24. (The miseries of the past will be forgotten.) The inhabitant shall say no more, 'I am sick;' the people that dwell there shall be forgiven all the iniquity (of the past)."[2]

His first attempt to get possession of Jerusalem having failed, Sennacherib determined on another effort to secure it without being compelled to undertake a siege. Disguising his real feelings, he stooped to dictate a letter to Hezekiah, and with this he sent back the Rabshakeh, to make a second attempt to terrify the king into surrender. To take the city by a tedious formal investment would require too much time. Recounting, like his spokesman at the first parley, a long list of cities and countries[3] whose gods had been unable to protect him against his arms, and boasting of his deeds in all lands, how he had utterly destroyed them, the letter of Sennacherib warned Hezekiah not to let Jehovah deceive him by a false promise of deliverance.

This renewed attempt of the enemy to wrest Jerusalem

[1] No longer in dread of conquest or deportation; not like a tent that is taken down and carried off, but fixed and permanent.

[2] Isa. xxxiii. 7–24.

[3] Gozan, Harran, Rezeph, and Telessar were in Mesopotamia. Some other places are not known.

from his hands having been duly read by the king, he once more betook himself, with a touching piety, to the temple, to spread it before Jehovah, as if to stir up His wrath at its blasphemies, by laying them, as it were, before His eyes, and imploring His protection. Such an act was in strict keeping with the feeling of antiquity towards the Higher Powers, and, strange to say, finds an almost exact parallel in a case told of Assurbanipal. On receiving a message that a powerful enemy was determined to fight him, that great monarch, it is recorded, went into the temple of Ishtar, and, approaching the goddess, wept before her, and reminded her of his good deeds in restoring her temples; professed that he loved her courts; contrasted the conduct of his enemy—the violent man, hater of the gods—with his own; related all her titles and glories, told how his foe gathered an army against him, and wound up by imploring her to hurl him down, like a stone, in the day of battle, and sweep him away like a storm and an evil wind. He relates how the goddess heard his prayer, telling him not to fear, and how, on the same night, a seer, while he slept, had a vision, in which the goddess appeared to him surrounded with glory, and holding a bow in her hand, ready equipped for war.[1] She sent the king an encouraging message, telling him to eat food, drink wine, and engage in festivities, for she would give him the victory.

The prayer of the Hebrew king, rising far above that of the Assyrian, was alike touching and sublime.

"XXXVII. 16. O Jehovah of Hosts," it runs; "the God of Israel, who art enthroned upon the cherubim! Thou alone art the true God of all the kingdoms of the earth, for Thou hast made both heaven and earth. 17. Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open Thine eyes

1 Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 156–7.

and look, and read the blasphemies of this letter against Thee, the living God. 18. Of a truth, Jehovah, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations and their lands, 19. and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. 20. Therefore they have been able to destroy them. Now, therefore, O Jehovah, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone art the one living God, Jehovah."[1]

He had appealed to a God who hears prayer[2] and never forsakes the righteous when they call on Him in the day of trouble.[3] Forthwith Isaiah received a fresh prophetic intimation, which he was commissioned to communicate at once to Hezekiah. Hastening therefore to the palace, he cheered and confirmed the courage of the king in words which still move the heart as we read them.

"XXXVII. 21. Thus says Jehovah, the God of Israel,"[4] he began: "'I have heard thy prayer concerning Sennacherib, king of Assyria.' 22. This is the word Jehovah has spoken against him:

"The virgin daughter of Zion despises and mocks at thee; the daughter of Jerusalem tosses her head at thee! 23. Whom hast thou affected to despise? Whom hast thou dared to blaspheme? Against whom hast thou raised thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? Against the Holy One of Israel!

"24. By (the mouth of) thy servants thou hast affected to despise Jehovah, saying: 'With the multitude of my chariots have I ascended the heights of the mountains, to the very recesses of Lebanon, and have hewn down its tallest cedars and its choicest cypresses, and I will press on to its farthest height[5] and its garden-like woodland.[6] 25. (Where water was scarce) I dug wells (for my army) and have drunk in abundance; the arms and canals of the Nile will be dried up

[1] Isa. xxxvii. 16–20.
[2] Ps. lxv. 2.
[3] Ps. l. 15.
[4] Isa. xxxvii. 21–35.
[5] Other conquerors have boasted much in the same way. Alaric marching on Rome says: "We have seen the mountains sink; the rivers dry up before us."
[6] This may, as already noticed, mean Mount Zion, and the royal pleasure grounds of Jerusalem. In 2 Kings xix. 23, the phrase is "lodging-place," or "caravanserai," instead of "height."

under the tread of my countless host (and will not hinder my entrance to Egypt).'

"26. (All this, thy boasting, is vain folly, for thou hast done nothing of thine own might, but only as the appointed instrument of Jehovah). Hast thou not heard (by thy spies and by common report), through My prophets, that it was I, long ago, from the days of old, who determined and planned all that has happened, and that in laying waste (the) strong cities (of Judah, as thou hast done), and turning them into heaps of ruins (thou hast only been carrying out My will)? 27. It was only because of this that their citizens were weak, dismayed, and helpless; that they were (before the flames of thy rage) like the grass of the field, or the young herbs, or the grass on the roof tops, or the springing corn, before the scorching sun or the glowing hot wind!

"28. But (to shew thee how worthless are thy boasts and thy blasphemies) I have (all along) known thy abode in Assyria, before thy marching out from it (thy starting against Judah), thy invasion of the land, and thy rage against Me! 29. (And now,) because thy fury oversteps the limits I have allowed thee, and thy (insolent) boasting has come up into my ears, I will put My ring in thy nose, and My bridle into thy jaws (as men do with a furious wild beast), and will turn thee back (to Assyria) by the way thou camest (with thy object unaccomplished)!

"30. And this shall be the sign to thee (O Judah, that I shall do this)! This year ye shall eat what is self-grown (from the last crop); the next ye shall have only what springs from the old roots; but the third year ye shall sow, and reap, and plant fresh vineyards and eat of their fruit. 31. And the remnant of the House of Judah, that has escaped (from the Assyrian), shall again strike root downward and bear fruit upward. 32. For a remnant shall go forth from Jerusalem, and those who escape shall go forth from Mount Zion (to re-people the land). The zeal of Jehovah of Hosts shall do this!

"33. Therefore, thus saith Jehovah concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city (Jerusalem), nor shoot an arrow into it; nor bring the shield of his troops against it; nor cast up an earthen wall round it (as besiegers do. 34. Instead of this) he shall return (from Egypt to Assyria) by the way that he came (along the coast, leaving Jerusalem unattacked), and he shall not come into this city, saith Jehovah. 35. For I will protect it (as a bird protects its nest), and save it, for My own sake and for the sake of My servant David."

Tirhakah had been hurled back ignominiously towards Egypt, so that no help could come from him or his army, and thus no human aid was left to stand between the petty mountain town and the overwhelming might of Assyria. Details of the battle of Eltekeh, apparently so disastrous to the prospects of Jerusalem, are not known, but, however the battle really ended, Sennacherib did not follow up the victory, and Tirhakah, on his side, was too much weakened to keep his ground, and retreated to Egypt, leaving Hezekiah, so far as he was concerned, to fall into the hands of his terrible foe. Yet stripped as Judah now was of all human help, when the walls of Jerusalem alone kept out the Great King, the words of the prophet were to be awfully fulfilled, that Jehovah Himself would appear to deliver the city. The striking accomplishment of his prophetic word, which, indeed, was only the repetition of others as precise, is attested alike by sacred and profane antiquity. The Bible tells us that "the Angel of the Lord went forth that night and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand, and when men arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."[1] "All the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and the captains of the camp perished," says another text.[2] "So Sennacherib returned with shame of face to his own land." In marked corroboration of this, Herodotus relates that the priests of Egypt told him how Sennacherib, king of the Arabians and Assyrians, marched a large army into Egypt, which was then governed, he says, "not by a monarch of the royal line, but by a priest of Ptah, named Sethos, who had taken from the military caste the lands bestowed on them by former kings. On this account they refused to fight, leav-

[1] 2 Kings xix. 35. [2] 2 Chron. xxxii. 21. Isa. xxxvii. 36.

ing Sethos to face Sennacherib with an army of workmen and traders. He, therefore, being reduced to a strait, entered the house of his god, and lamented before him the calamities impending; while thus engaged, falling asleep, Ptah appeared to him in a vision, telling him that he would stand by him, and send him victory. Trusting this vision, the priest-king took with him such men as would follow him, and shut himself up in Pelusium, at the entrance of Egypt. But when the Assyrians arrived there, myriads of field mice entering the camp, gnawed the straps of their quivers and the strings of their bows, and the handles of their shields, so that the Egyptians, next day, had only to pursue a terrified retreating host. And to this day, he adds, a stone statue of this king stands in the temple of Ptah, with a mouse in his hand, and an inscription: "Whoever looks on me, let him revere the gods."[1]

At what time in the prosecution of Sennacherib's designs against Jerusalem this catastrophe overtook him, is uncertain. Was "that night" alluded to in the account in the Book of Kings, the one following the day on which the words of doom had been spoken? Isaiah's declaration that the Assyrians would neither "come into the city, nor shoot an arrow, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it,"[2] seems at least to imply that, whether the prophet uttered his denunciation on the day of the second appearance of the enemy before Jerusalem, or at an earlier

[1] Herod., ii. 141. A similar statue of Apollo, with a mouse at his foot, stood at Chryse, in the Troad. It was said to commemorate the overthrow of the Teucrians by an army of field mice, which ate the leather straps of their armour in the night, and forced them to retreat. Blakesley's *Herodotus*, i. 273.

Supposing this borrowed from the Egyptian tradition, it may have indirectly risen from the story of the defeat of the Assyrians. The mouse was the symbol of wasting and destruction, and was, perhaps, intended only to embody the idea of secret and irresistible ruin.

[2] Isa. xxxvii. 33.

date, the crisis burst on them before they had completed their dispositions for attack, which, perhaps, was delayed by the desire to secure the surrender of the city by negotiation rather than force. The Greek version of the passage in Kings simply states that the visitation of God broke on the host by night, and Isaiah omits any special reference to the time.[1] Josephus,[2] in agreement with the tradition of his day,[3] assumes that the first day of the siege was also the last, and saw both the encampment and flight of the foe.

The vast multitude who perished—185,000 men[4]—points to a far greater calamity than could have befallen the army-corps detached for service against Jerusalem. It seems probable that affairs had not prospered with Sennacherib from the first, in spite of his pompous inscriptions. Indeed, it appears as if this could be read between the lines; for, though he boasts of having gained a victory at Eltekeh,[5] no list of prisoners or details of the booty are given, and he has to content himself with stating that he took the town of Eltekeh, and Timnah, which very possibly was only an unwalled village. He speaks of having shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage, but there is nothing said of the capture of Jerusalem, nor of the conquest of Egypt, or even of his having entered it, though this was the great object of the campaign. He vaunts, indeed, of having forced Hezekiah to hand over to him, along with the tribute he had imposed, "his daughters, and the male and female inmates of the palace," but this is in all probability an empty flourish, for the surrender of members of the royal family and of the members of the court, including the ladies of the harem, would have been a humiliation only to be exacted after the

[1] Isa. xxxvii. 35.
[2] *Ant.*, X. i. 5.
[3] *Gemara Sanhed.*, iii. 26.
[4] 2 Kings xix. 35.
[5] See p. 453

unconditional capture of the city, and there is no hint of that in the Bible narrative.

It seems probable that after the doubtful triumph at Eltekeh, Sennacherib contented himself with besieging and taking Libnah with part of his army; a large force being detached against Jerusalem. But a greater than man was now fighting against him; He who rides on the wings of the wind, whose majesty he had dared to challenge. What the agency employed to humble him was, is not told us, but, in the opinion of many, it may have been the simoom or khamseen wind, which overpowered or destroyed the army of Cambyses, and is said to have killed 10,000 people in Cairo in 1696, and as many as 300,000 in Constantinople, in 1714. There are, however, various winds almost equally destructive, which sweep in fiery glow from the deserts and destroy life in many cases, and hence it is impossible to say with any certainty what blast may have swept over the army of Sennacherib, if, indeed, it was a wind at all and not rather a sudden outburst of the plague that destroyed his host. This awful visitation may, indeed, have already shewn itself in the host, but, if so, this was only the premonition of an awfully sudden and violent outburst in its different sections before Jerusalem, beyond Eltekeh, and at Libnah, to which the headquarters had been removed on the fall of Lachish. It usually appears first on the northern coast of Egypt, near which Sennacherib lay, and arises apparently from the malaria of the marshes in that region, as it has not returned to Alexandria since those in the neighbourhood of that city have been drained.[1] Midwinter is the ordinary time for its first appearance, and it lasts, at most, six months. At its first outbreak it causes almost instant death and even

[1] Brockhaus' *Lex.*, vol. ii. p. 642.

during its whole visitation it is commonly fatal in a few hours. The Jewish tradition handed down from generation to generation understood the language of Scripture as indicating an outbreak of pestilence,[1] let loose, as in the case of the similar visitation of Jerusalem under David, by the angel of God specially commissioned to inflict the Divine wrath.[2] It was alarming enough that reports should be brought in of a new force under the redoubtable Tirhakah being on the march against him. Even had his armies been in good condition, a fresh struggle with so doughty an adversary was enough to raise anxiety. But the prospect under the circumstances was disastrous. News from the advanced divisions and from the force at Jerusalem revealed the same widespread ruin of his host as he saw around him at Libnah.

The Assyrian army must have been very imposing in its variety of national uniforms, drawn as it was from so many countries, and in the splendid equipment of its high officers. Slingers and archers formed the light infantry, wearing braided tunics, and bands round the head to confine the hair, their weapons variously decorated in the different brigades. The heavy infantry had spears and shields, shining breastplates and cross belts, supporting small arms at their side. The archers drew their arrows to their ear, like the old English. The front rank of the spearmen knelt, the second stooped, and the third stood erect, so that three rows of spears met the charge of the enemy, while, from behind them, the archers sent off their volleys. The cavalry and chariots were a great feature. Ridden without saddles or horseshoes, as was usual in antiquity, they differed from ours in some things, but the horses are spoken of by the

[1] Jos., *Ant.*, X. i. 5. [2] 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, 16, 17.

prophets as full of spirit, with hoofs like flint, and sweeping on like the wind. Many of the regiments had armour, and all had decorated cloths on the horses' backs. But the chariots were the glory of the army; no outlay was spared by the high officers on the splendour of their personal outfit, and on their horses, charioteers, and chariots. Purple, the war colour, prevailed, and the robes of the generals and other chiefs were gorgeously embroidered. Innumerable pennons fluttered from forests of lances, lofty standards blazing with gold rose far and near; and whole battalions of warriors clad in steel rode proudly past. It must indeed have been a gallant sight, but a terrible! But now, instead of the thousands of mail-clad warriors, lately so eager for the battle, only a remnant could marshal round Sennacherib. His mighty men of valour—the rank and file of his proudest battalions—his officers and generals, had been struck down. "Captains and rulers, clothed most gorgeously, with girdles on their loins, exceeding in dyed attire and scarlet robes, horsemen riding upon horses, all of them desirable young men:"[1] squadrons, and companies, numerous as the leaves of the woods,[2] were lying dead around him. Asshur, his god, had forsaken him, and the evil spirits of the abyss, the Maskim, the Gigim, the Utuq, and the Spirits of the Air—those awful genii with bodies of flame—had been let loose on him and his host, to destroy them.[3] Deserted by heaven, and left to the fury of the dreaded demons of pestilence and death, the panic-stricken king could think of nothing but instant, though ignominious, flight towards Nineveh, where he might hope to appease his gods. Orderly retreat was impossible. The skeleton battalions were too demoralized. A deadly fear had seized the survivors. The spectacle in each

[1] Ezek. xxiii. 12-15. [2] Isa. x. 34. [3] Lenormant, *La Magie*, p. 27.

camp was too appalling to leave room for hesitation. The genius of Byron, embodying with wonderful accuracy the details given by the Hebrew sacred writers, helps us to realize it, in a measure.

> The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
> And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
> And the sheen of his spears was like stars on the sea,
> When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.
>
> Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
> The host, with their banners, at sunset were seen;
> Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
> That host, on the morrow, lay withered and strown.
>
> For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
> And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
> And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
> And their hearts but once heaved and for ever grew still.
>
> And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
> But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
> And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
> And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.
>
> And there lay the rider, distorted and pale,
> With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
> And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
> The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.
>
> And the widows of Asshur are loud in their wail,
> And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal:
> And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
> Hath melted, like snow, in the glance of the Lord!

The transition of the population of Judah and Jerusalem from intense alarm to the wildest rejoicings, must have been like a sudden passing from the darkness and terrors of a tempest, to light and calm. The flight of the Assyrians was the signal for a wild pursuit by well-nigh all the surviv-

ing manhood of the land. The garrisons of the towns and fortresses which Sennacherib had taken had doubtless abandoned them, and the whole host, in tumultuous and disorganized crowds, could think only of escape to their own country. Isaiah describes the booty taken as immense. The inhabitants of Jerusalem rushed out, like locusts crowding to a green field, to plunder the camp.[1] Even the crippled and lame, he tells us, hurried to the spoil.[2] The hills over which the Assyrians fled received the name of the "mountains of prey."[3] As the French army in its retreat from Moscow was pursued even by the peasants of both sexes and remorselessly killed in thousands, in their helplessness, so, doubtless, was it in this great uprising of the remnant of Judah. Weak and spiritless, at once from terror and disease, hill and valley saw the warriors of Sennacherib sink down to die, a prey "to the vultures and kites of the mountains and the wild beasts of the land: the birds summered on them and the wild beasts wintered on them."[4] Perhaps the only parallel of which details are known, must be sought in the flight from Russia, in 1812, in which thirty thousand horses perished in a few days, and only twenty thousand men, without arms, remained alive, out of five hundred thousand.[5] Yet we are not without a strangely exact parallel to the awful visitation itself, in the military history of modern times. "To obliterate the disgrace of Pavia, Francis I., in league with England, Switzerland, Rome, Geneva, and Venice, against the powerful Emperor of Germany, sent a fine army into Italy. The emperor's troops gave way wherever the French plumes appeared, and victory seemed faithful only to the banners of France, and to the

[1] Isa. xxxiii. 4. [2] Isa. xxxiii. 23. [3] Ps. lxxvi. 4.
[4] Isa. xviii. 6. [5] Labaume's *Campaign in Russia*, pp. 339, 391.

military experience of a tried leader. Everything promised a glorious issue ; Naples alone, weakly defended by German lansquenets[1] and Spaniards, remained still to be vanquished. The siege was opened on the 1st of May, 1528, and the general confidently pledged his honour for the conquest of this strong city, which had once been so destructive to the French. It was easy with an army of 30,000 veteran warriors to overpower the Imperialists ; and a small body of English seemed to have come merely to partake in the festivals after the expected victory. The city, too, suffered from a scarcity, for it was blockaded by Doria with his Genoese galleys ; and water, fit to drink, failed after Lautrec had turned off the aqueducts of Poggioreale ; so that the plague, which had never entirely ceased among the Germans since the sacking of Rome, began to spread. Ere long, however, pestilences began to rage among the troops, and human courage could no longer withstand the 'far-shooting arrows of the god of day.' Those soldiers who were not already confined to bed in their tents were seen with pallid visages, swelled legs, and bloated bellies, scarcely able to crawl ; so that, weary of nightly watching, they were often plundered by the marauding Neapolitans. The great mortality did not commence until about the 15th of July, but so dreadful was its ravages, that about three weeks were sufficient to complete the almost entire destruction of the army. Around and within the tents vacated by the death of their inmates, noxious weeds sprung up. Thousands perished without help, either in a state of stupor, or in the raving delirium of fever. In the intrenchments, in the tents, and wherever death had overtaken his victims, there these unburied corpses lay, and the dead that were interred,

[1] Lansquenet—Landsknecht, a common soldier.

swollen with putridity, burst their shallow graves, and spread a poisonous stench far and wide over the camp. There was no longer any thought of order or military discipline, and many of the commanders and captains were either sick themselves, or had fled to the neighbouring towns, in order to avoid the contagion. The consequence was that within the space of seven weeks, out of the whole host, which up to that period had been eager for combat, a mere handful remained, consisting of a few thousands of cadaverous figures, who were almost incapable of bearing arms, or of following the commands of their sick leaders. On the 29th of August the siege was raised. Fifteen days after, the heroic Lautrec, bowed down by chagrin and disease, had resigned his breath ; the wreck of the army retreated amid thunder and rain, and were soon captured by the Imperialists, so that but few of them ever saw their native land again. This siege brought still greater misery upon France than even the fatal battle of Pavia, for about 5,000 of the French nobility, some from the most distinguished families, had perished under the walls of Naples. Its remoter consequences, too, were humiliating to the king and the people ; since, owing to its failure, all those hitherto feasible schemes were blighted, which had for their object the establishment of French dominion beyond the Alps. The glory of the French arms was departed, and her proud banners cowered beneath an unhallowed spectre."[1]

A deliverance so wonderful might well fill the hearts of all with the deepest emotions. The mountain wave that hung toppling over the State the one moment had in the next sunk back and disappeared. What no available human power could have done had been accomplished, without the

[1] Hecker's *Epidemics of the Middle Ages*, pp. 721-2.

intervention of human agency, by a word from the lips of Jehovah. The mightiest of empires had been proved impotent as the idle pageant of a dream, against the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The war had become a great struggle between Assyrian idolatry and the true religion, by Isaiah's constant reference to Jehovah as the Leader and Champion of Judah. The triumph was God's. To Him belonged the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the majesty, and the victory.[1] The salvation He had wrought for His people was a repetition of that which He had accomplished under Moses, ages before, against Pharaoh and his host. For a moment the grand Puritanism of the better ages of Israel reappeared. The temple services, revived in the beginning of the reign with all the splendour of the time of David, Solomon, and Jehoshaphat, were never more earnest, or thronged by more eager crowds. The Psalms of David[2] and of Asaph, and the music of the Levitical choirs organized by Gad and Nathan, David's favourite seers, and by the poet king himself, filled the courts of the Sacred House with melodious anthems, and the smoke of countless sacrifices rose from the well-ordered ministrations of the successive courses of priests. Nor was the inspiration of new psalmists awanting to round the fulness of that granted to the triumphant prophets. Some of their sacred lyrics, indeed, are still preserved in the Canon. Among these, the forty-sixth Psalm, "by the sons of Korah," "a song for sopranos," fitly embodies the national exultation at the fall of the arch-enemy of the land.

"God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will we not fear though the earth be shaken;

[1] 1 Chron. xxix. 11. [2] 2 Chron. xxix. 25, 31.

Though the mountains tremble on their foundations, beneath the
depths of the seas.
Let the waters roar and foam!
Let the mountains shake before their waves,
(Jehovah of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!)

"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God;
The holy place of the dwellings of the Most High!
God is in her midst; she shall not be moved.
God shall help her, with the morning dawn.
The nations raged; their kingdoms were moved against us,
But God uttered His voice, and the earth melted with fear!
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence!

"Come, behold the deeds of Jehovah;
What wondrous things[1] He has done in the earth!
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow; He snaps the spear asunder;
He burns the war chariot in the fire!

"'Be still,' says He, 'and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the heathen!
I will be exalted in the earth.'
Jehovah of Hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our strong defence."[2]

The forty-seventh Psalm is also attributed to this time and is worthy of it.

"Clap your hands, all ye nations;
Shout unto God with the voice of triumph!
For Jehovah, the Most High, is terrible:
He, alone, is the Great King, over all the earth.
He subdues the nations under us:
The peoples under our feet.
He chooses our inheritance for us,
The land which was the glory of Jacob, whom He loved!

[1] Ewald and Hitzig. Olshausen renders it "terrors." [2] Ps. xlvi.

"God went up into His sanctuary, before our armies, with a shout!
Jehovah went up before them with the sound of trumpets!
Sing praises to God, sing praises!
Sing praises to our King, sing praises!
For God is King of all the earth.
Sing ye praises, ye skilled choirs![1]
God reigns over the heathen!
He sits triumphant on His holy throne.

"The nobles of the peoples assemble
As the servants of the God of Abraham;
For all the shields—the protectors and kings—of the earth are Jehovah's:
He is greatly exalted."[2]

The seventy-sixth Psalm has the inscription in the Septuagint, "On the Assyrian," and was thus attributed, centuries before Christ, to the great deliverance under Hezekiah. Its stirring words may well have expressed the triumph of so great a time.

"In Judah is God known;
His name is great in Israel;
In Salem is the covert[3] of the Lion of Judah:
His lair[4] is in Zion.
There brake he the flashing arrows of the bow;
The shield, and the sword, and the battle.[5]
Glorious art Thou, and majestic, coming down from the hills of Jerusalem, the mountains of prey;[6]

[1] Hitzig refers the words translated, "with understanding," "to the trained singing of the choirs;" supposing that the soldiery have sung what precedes. *Die Psalmen*, vol. i. p. 262.

[2] An anticipation of a general acknowledgment of Jehovah by the kings and princes of the nations now subdued by Him. They are represented as consecrated to Him, and as having become the servants of Jehovah. May that time, in the highest sense, soon arrive!

[3] Same word = "den," Ps. x. 9; "covert," Jer. xxv. 38.

[4] Same word = Job xxxviii. 40, "den." Ps. civ. 22. Cant. iv. 8. Amos iii. 4. Nah. ii. 12 (13).

[5] Moll says, "weapon of war."

[6] Moll. The hills henceforth famous for the booty gathered on their slopes and in their valleys.

The stout-hearted are spoiled: they sleep their sleep:
None of the mighty warriors can find their hands.
At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both chariot and horse lie in a dead sleep.

"Thou, Thou art to be feared!
And who may stand before Thee when Thou art angry!
From heaven Thou soundedst forth Thy judgment:
The earth feared and was still,
When God stood up for judgment;
To save the oppressed ones of the earth!

"For the wrath of man shall praise Thee;
With what is left of that wrath, after Thy judgments,
Thou girdest Thyself for Thine own purposes.[1]
Praise Jehovah your God, and pay vows to Him!

"All ye that are round about Him!
Bring gifts of homage to Him that ought to be feared!
He mows down the pride of princes;
He is terrible to the kings of the earth."

The profound impression of a deliverance so wonderful never passed away. Judas Maccabæus, on the eve of his great battle with Nicanor, recalled it to his soldiers. The story of the Great King's flight from Jerusalem before the outstretched arm of God is still read in the churches of Moscow on the anniversary of the retreat of the French from Russia. The opening watchword of the Jewish hymn, "God is our refuge and strength," was once the inscription over the grandest of Christian churches—that of St. Sophia at Constantinople; and it is the basis of Luther's magnificent hymn, "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott," sung by the German armies in the great French war of 1870, before each battle, as it had been in every earlier crisis of the nation for well-nigh three hundred years.

[1] This seems the meaning of these obscure words.

The remaining years of Hezekiah's reign passed in peace and security. It was perhaps in them that he reconquered the portion of Judah wrested from Ahaz by the Philistines.[1] The roads, which had been deserted during the Assyrian troubles, were again thronged; the towns that had been destroyed were rebuilt. It has been fancied, but on apparently insufficient grounds, that Sennacherib returned to Palestine eleven years later, in B.C. 690, but he had little inclination to revisit scenes associated with such a tremendous disaster,[2] and hence Judah never saw him again. Districts that had fallen out of culture were again needed by prosperous communities, for the population gradually recovered the loss of their brethren deported to Nineveh. Colonies of Simeonites settled in the far south of the Negeb;[3] trade revived through the land, and the kingdom was respected by surrounding nations. Like a summer sun, Hezekiah, seen through the calm golden air of his later years, seemed larger at his setting than when at his height.

Sennacherib survived the gigantic disaster of his invasion of Palestine, for nineteen years, which were marked by a succession of campaigns on a scale of grandeur that shews how readily the empire, by its pitiless conscriptions, recovered from the military losses it had sustained.

In the year B.C. 700 he marched southward, to Babylonia, for the second time. Merodach Baladan, after his defeat B.C. 704, had hidden for a time in the marshy districts of the lower Euphrates, but, having been hunted out of them by the Assyrian generals sent in pursuit, embarked, with his gods and his treasures, from the coast of the Persian Gulf—"the Great Sea of the Rising Sun"—and, having crossed it

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 8.

[2] Smith's *Assyria*, pp. 117, 123. Schrader's *Keilinschriften*, pp. 174–196.

[3] 1 Chron. iv. 34–43.

in safety, landed at Nagitu, a city of Elam. Here he was beyond the reach of Sennacherib, and, with his numerous followers, was cheered by a friendly welcome. It had been the emigration of a colony rather than the flight of an individual.

But Chaldæa was not pacified even when its king was lost. Suzub, a patriot chief, became so formidable in his resistance that Sennacherib had to set out against him in person, and dispersed his army, forcing him to flee to the hiding places of the south. Now, at last, the whole region that had caused so much trouble could be laid waste. Southern Babylonia was given up to the soldiery; its towns and villages plundered, and thirty thousand fighting men, captured in battle, deported to distant lands, or incorporated in the Assyrian army.

The years B.C. 699–698, or those immediately after, were spent in a fifth campaign against the wild mountain tribes north of Assyria. A vast mountain chain runs east and west, from the region of Lake Van into Asia Minor, forming there the chain now called the Taurus, but bearing throughout, among the Assyrians, the name of Nipur. The parts of this great range which extend through Western Armenia, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, were invaded, to subdue the hardy races inhabiting their hill-sides and valleys. The physical difficulties of such a task were immense, Sennacherib and his soldiers having often to climb the mountains after their foes. But in the end these were overcome, and the whole region devastated; its towns burned; its flocks and herds driven off; and vast numbers of the population, with their goods, carried into slavery in Assyria.

The flight of Merodach Baladan and his companions to Elam had, meanwhile, been a source of irritation to the

Great King. They were his subjects, and he would force them to return; they were rebels, and he would shew them his power, and crush them so that they should henceforth be harmless. Three or four years, from about B.C. 697, were therefore occupied with a series of operations against them. If Merodach Baladan had escaped by sea, he would follow him over the same waters, and thus escape the difficult task of fighting his way through the Elamite mountains. Establishing two dockyards—the one on the Euphrates, the other at Nineveh—he caused a fleet, like Phœnician galleys,[1] to be built by shipwrights brought from Tyre and other Mediterranean ports, for the purpose. His own people being unacquainted with ocean navigation, sailors were engaged from Ionia, Tyre, Sidon, and other sea-faring races of the Levant. The vessels when finished were floated empty, down the Euphrates and Tigris, till the depth of water permitted their being laden. Stores and troops were then taken on board, and the armada dropped down towards the Persian Gulf. Before entering it, however, Sennacherib was careful to propitiate Hea, the god of the ocean, by sacrifices, and by offering to him images of ships and fishes, made of gold, which he bore out to the sea-waters with imposing ceremonies, and dropped into the depths in which the god was supposed to dwell. Believing he had thus secured the favour of the Assyrian Neptune, he now set sail, keeping close to the coast, and having forced a landing at the Chaldæan settlements, plundered them, carried off many of their inhabitants, and returned to the Euphrates with the captives and the spoil.

The unfortunate but unconquerable Babylonians, hoping that an undertaking apparently so rash and dangerous as

[1] He calls them "Syrian ships."

this naval expedition might end in disaster, had once more risen, during Sennacherib's absence. Merodach Baladan was dead, but Suzub, the Chaldæan patriot who had taken his place, obtained help from Elam and proclaimed himself king at Babylon, whither he was escorted by Elamite troops. Yet his triumph was brief; for the Assyrian generals instantly marched against him, and after defeating his army, took him prisoner and sent him in chains to Nineveh. Elam itself was next invaded, the city of Erech taken and

The Royal Chariot of the Assyrian King.

sacked; its gods carried off, and a doubtful battle fought with the king, who himself led the army.

The resistance of Babylonia and Chaldæa for so many years had been made possible only by the support received from the Elamite monarch. New operations were therefore ordered against him: his mountains invaded; thirty-four cities and many villages taken, each, as it fell, being set on fire, till the smoke of them, in the words of Sennacherib himself, hid the face of the heavens like a vast cloud. The king of Elam, however, was still out of reach, for he had

retired to Haidala, his mountain capital, in the interior, and the rains and snows of winter, which had now set in, forced the Assyrians to suspend hostilities.

Suzub had escaped from Nineveh while Sennacherib was absent, and made his way back to Chaldæa, where his presence sufficed to excite a fresh revolt. He had again, however, to flee to Elam, but soon returned thence with a fresh body of followers, and once more entered Babylon as its king. Breaking open the treasuries of Bel, in the capital, and of Nergal, at Cutha, and seizing the wealth belonging to these gods, he hastened to send it to Elam to secure help. It was now the year B.C. 692. A new king ruled in Elam, but he marched to Suzub's assistance, without delay, with an army of Elamites, Persians, Medes, Chaldæans, and others, and the son of Merodach Baladan, who inherited his father's undying hostility to Assyria. It was all, however, in vain. A great battle was fought on the lower Tigris, and Suzub, with his allies, utterly defeated.

"They seized the front of my fenced camp," says Sennacherib, "and discharged their arrows. Then I prayed to Asshur, the Moon, the Sun, Bel, Nebo, Nergal, Ishtar of Nineveh, and Ishtar of Arbela, the gods, my protectors—that I might conquer my powerful enemies, and they heard my earnest prayers and came to my assistance. From my heart I vowed a thank-offering for it.

"I drove rapidly, in the fury of my heart, in my great war chariot —the Sweeper away of Enemies—I drove rapidly. I took in my hand my great bow which Asshur gave me; I enclosed my legs in greaves of fine workmanship, and, rushing on the whole army of those wicked enemies, I crushed them together in crowded confusion, and thundered like the god Sin.[1] By command of Asshur the great lord, my Lord, I hurled as it were fiery darts[2] against my enemies. I cut to pieces

[1] The god of the sky. He wielded the thunderbolt, like the Jupiter Tonans of the Romans.

[2] It has been thought that some composition like Greek fire was used by the Assyrians, but it is doubtful if there be an allusion to such an invention here.

the hostile troops with the revolving blades.[1] I captured the great Chain of Honour of the General of the Elamites. I eagerly attacked and defeated the chief officers of the king of Elam, who wore gold-handled daggers, and rings of bright gold, crowded round their legs—men like a herd of fat oxen. I cut off their heads, like victims, and tore off, with derision, their highly-worked decorations, casting down their rings and bracelets on the earth in a lofty heap, like the fall of a great shower. The faultless horses yoked to my chariot stepped slowly through deep pools of blood. My chariot wheels were clogged with blood and flesh as they swept away the slain and fallen. I salted the heads of the soldiers like fish, and packed them in great wicker baskets."[2]

Suzub, king of Babylon, and the king of Elam, mounting their chariots, tried to ride through the torrent of fugitives, but had to give up the attempt and to flee on foot. Squadrons of chariots pursued the remnant of the enemy and slew all they overtook. This terrible battle ended the fighting of the year.

Next spring, however, apparently that of B.C. 691, Sennacherib was once more in the field, and marching against Babylon, now left without outside support, stormed it and gave it up to his soldiery. The "city and houses" were destroyed from "the foundation to the upper chambers," the whole being burnt to the ground and the very ruins thrown down. The great walls of the city were demolished; the temples of the gods plundered and destroyed, the sacred images broken to pieces; the towers of brickwork levelled; and, to complete the destruction, the embankment of the river or canal "Arakhti" was pierced, and the waters allowed to flood the whole site. Babylon was at last destroyed. Yet the Babylonians were ready to rise again, ten

[1] Possibly Sennacherib refers to circular swords. See vol. ii. p. 152. Iron scythes fixed on the chariot wheels were apparently of a later date. See vol. ii. p. 433.

[2] To be sent to Nineveh and exposed as trophies.

years later, when Esarhaddon was in Sennacherib's place.[1] Another expedition, not mentioned in the inscriptions, but alluded to by Greek writers,[2] is said to have been made to Cilicia by Sennacherib; one incident at least being still of interest, that of his alleged founding of the city of Tarsus —afterwards the birthplace of St. Paul. It was certainly regarded by the Greeks as an Assyrian town, and it seems as if we might accept it as beyond reasonable doubt, that the native place of the great Apostle of the Gentiles owed its origin to the Great King who fled in shame from before the walls of Jerusalem.

During the last nine years of his reign, Sennacherib lived at Nineveh in the great palace which he had built for himself, or rather for his son Assur-Muhik, or Assur-Munik, probably Adrammelech of the Book of Kings,[3] who had become heir to the throne after the death of his elder brother Assur-nadin-sum, in the year 694 before Christ. The splendour of this wonderful creation may be in part realized by the fact that it was nearly three times as long as St. Paul's Cathedral and more than twice as deep or broad.[4] All that skill, unbounded wealth, the command of the labour of innumerable prisoners of war and other slaves, and the resources of a mighty empire, could do, was lavished on this amazing structure; the grandest building raised at any time even in Nineveh. True to the military instincts of his race, moreover, he set himself to fortify his capital so as to make it, if possible, impregnable. Its walls and gates were

[1] Authorities. The Annals of Sennacherib on the Bellino Cylinder; the Taylor Cylinder; the Bavian Inscription and the Great Bull Inscription.

[2] Rawlinson's *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. p. 453.

[3] = The god Adar is lord. Schrader.

[4] Length of St Paul's, 514 feet; depth or breadth, 286. Length of Sennacherib's palace, 1,500 feet; depth or breadth, 700 feet. Smith's *Assyria*, p. 125.

restored and partly rebuilt : the outer rampart constituting a gigantic fortification eight miles in circumference. On these vast undertakings the Cilicians, Elamites, Babylonians, Medes, and Jews, carried off from their native countries, were forced to toil : their labours, indeed, achieving most of the amazing results. The bricks for the city walls were made by them. They raised the great mounds of earth on which the palaces rested, and they dragged into their places, by the unaided strain of thews and muscle, the huge colossal figures which stood at the gates and doors of these vast structures.

We know nothing of the circumstances which led to Sennacherib's murder. To die a violent death was, indeed, the ordinary fate of Assyrian kings. He had a large number of sons, the eldest of whom had been made viceroy of Babylon, but appears to have died before his father. The final conspiracy against him appears to have been the result of jealousy felt by some of the other sons at the favours thus shewn to one of their brothers. The father's will, now lying, strange to say, in the British Museum, shews that some years before his death he had bequeathed to his favourite Esarhaddon a quantity of private property, and this may well have been the special incitement which led to the final and successful plot against the king. The will reads thus : "I, Sennacherib, King of Multitudes, King of Assyria, bequeath armlets of gold, quantities of ivory, a platter of gold, ornaments and chains for the neck—all these beautiful things, of which there are heaps—and three sorts of precious stones, one and a half manahs, and two and a half shekels in weight, to Esarhaddon, my son, whose name was afterwards changed to Assur-sar-ellik-pal, by my wish. The treasure is deposited in the house of Amuk." There are

no witnesses as in other wills, the king not being required to have any.

Esarhaddon seems clearly, from this document, not to have been heir to the "throne," but the honours shewn him doubtless led his brothers to believe he would be made to supplant them. Two other sons, Adar-Melech and Nergal-

THE HAWK-HEADED GENIUS (KHORSABAD).

Perhaps the god Nisroch. The pine-cone in the left hand is always pointed towards the king, possibly as a symbolical medium of grace and protection. In the right hand is a sacred basket, symbolizing, it may be, the gifts to be granted the monarch or other protected personage. Rawlinson, *Anct. Monarchies*, vol. ii. pp. 263–4.

Sharezer,[1] resolved to murder their father and seize the throne, and, as the result, in B.C. 681, Sennacherib lay dead in the temple of Nebo, or, according to other accounts, in that of Nisroch—the gracious one—the god, by a strange irony, to whom prayers for a blessing on families were spe-

[1] The two names mean, Adar is king, and Nergal protect the king.

cially directed.[1] But the parricides gained nothing by their act, for Esarhaddon came forward to claim the throne, and they had to flee to Armenia, where the reigning prince allowed them to settle. Esarhaddon was then accepted as king by the whole nation.

[1] Schrader, p. 208. Sayce asserts, however, that there was no such god as Nisroch in Assyria, and that the reading should be Nusku, the god of literature, the companion of Nebo.

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